ESSAYS

AND

TREATISES

ON

SEVERAL SUBJECTS.

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THE

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF RELIGION.

INTRODUCTION.

As every inquiry which regards religion is of the utmoſt importance, there are two queſtions in particular which challenge our attention, to wit, that concerning its foundation in reaſon, and that concerning its origin in human nature. Happily, the firſt queſtion, which is the moſt important, admits of the moſt obvious, at leaſt, the cleareſt ſolution. The whole frame of nature beſpeaks an Intelligent Author; and no rational inquirer can, after ſerious reflection, ſuſpend his belief a moment with regard to the primary principles of genuine Theiſm and Religion. But the other queſtion, concerning the origin of religion in human nature, is expoſed to ſome more difficulty. The belief of inviſible, intelligent power, has been very generally diffuſed over the human race, in all places and in all ages; but it has neither perhaps been ſo univerſal as to admit of no exception, nor has it been, in any degree, uniform in the ideas

which it has ſuggeſted. Some nations have been diſcovered who entertained no ſentiments of Religion, if travellers and hiſtorians may be credited; and no two nations, and ſcarce any two men, have ever agreed preciſely in the ſame ſentiments. It would appear, therefore, that this preconception ſprings not from an original inſtinct or primary impreſſion of nature, ſuch as gives riſe to ſelf-love, affection between the ſexes, love of progeny, gratitude, reſentment; ſince every inſtinct of this kind has been found abſolutely univerſal in all nations and ages, and has always a preciſe determinate object which it inflexibly purſues. The firſt religious principles muſt be ſecondary, ſuch as may eaſily be perverted by various accidents and cauſes, and whoſe operation too, in ſome caſes, may, by an extraordinary concurrence of circumſtances, be altogether prevented. What thoſe principles are which give riſe to the original belief, and what thoſe accidents and cauſes are which direct its operation, is the ſubject of our preſent inquiry.

Sect. I. *That Polytheiſm was the primary Religion of Men.*

It appears to me, that if we conſider the improvement of human ſociety from rude beginnings to a ſtate of greater perfection, polytheiſm or idolatry was, and neceſſarily muſt have been, the firſt and moſt ancient religion of mankind. This opinion I ſhall endeavour to confirm by the following arguments.

It is a matter of fact inconteſtible, that about 1700 years ago all mankind were polytheiſts. The doubtful

and ſceptical principles of a few philoſophers, or the theiſm, and that too not entirely pure, of one or two nations, form no objection worth regarding. Behold then the clear teſtimony of hiſtory. The farther we mount up into antiquity, the more do we find mankind plunged into polytheiſm. No marks, no ſymptoms of any more perfect religion. The moſt ancient records of human race ſtill preſent us with that ſyſtem as the popular and eſtabliſhed creed. The north, the ſouth, the eaſt, the weſt, give their unanimous teſtimony to the ſame fact. What can be oppoſed to ſo full an evidence?

As far as writing or hiſtory reaches, mankind, in ancient times, appear univerſally to have been polytheiſts. Shall we aſſert, that in more ancient times, before the knowledge of letters, or the diſcovery of any art or ſcience, men entertained the principles of pure theiſm? That is, while they were ignorant and barbarous, they diſcovered truth; but fell into error as ſoon as they acquired learning and politeneſs.

But in this aſſertion you not only contradict all appearance of probability, but alſo our preſent experience concerning the principles and opinions of barbarous nations. The ſavage tribes of America, Africa, and Aſia, are all idolaters. Not a ſingle exception to this rule: Inſomuch, that were a traveller to tranſport himſelf into any unknown region, if he found inhabitants cultivated with arts and ſcience, though even upon that ſuppoſition there are odds againſt their being theiſts, yet could he not ſafely, till farther inquiry, pronounce any thing on that head: But if he found them ignorant and barbarous, he

might before-hand declare them idolaters; and there ſcarcely is a poſſibility of his being miſtaken.

It ſeems certain, that, according to the natural progreſs of human thought, the ignorant multitude muſt firſt entertain ſome groveling and familiar notion of ſuperior powers, before they ſtretch their conception to that perfect Being, who beſtowed order on the whole frame of nature. We may as reaſonably imagine, that men inhabited palaces before huts and cottages, or ſtudied geometry before agriculture; as aſſert that the Deity appeared to them a pure ſpirit, omniſcient, omnipotent, and omnipreſent, before he was apprehended to be a powerful, though limited being, with human paſſions and appetites, limbs and organs. The mind riſes gradually from inferior to ſuperior: By abſtracting from what is imperfect, it forms an idea of perfection: And ſlowly diſtinguiſhing the nobler parts of its own frame from the groſſer, it learns to transfer only the former, much elevated and refined, to its divinity. Nothing could diſturb this natural progreſs of thought, but ſome obvious and invincible argument, which might immediately lead the mind into the pure principles of theiſm, and make it overleap, at one bound, the vaſt interval which is interpoſed between the human and the divine nature. But though I allow, that the order and frame of the univerſe, when accurately examined, affords ſuch an argument; yet I can never think, that this conſideration could have an influence on mankind, when they formed their firſt rude notions of religion.

The cauſes of ſuch objects, as are quite familiar to us, never ſtrike our attention or curioſity; and however extraordinary or ſurpriſing theſe objects in themſelves, they are paſſed over, by the raw and ignorant multitude, without much examination or inquiry. Adam, riſing at once, in paradiſe, and in the full perfection of his faculties, would naturally, as repreſented by Milton, be aſtoniſhed at the glorious appearances of nature, the heavens, the air, the earth, his own organs and members; and would be led to aſk, whence this wonderful ſcene aroſe? But a barbarous, neceſſitous animal (ſuch as a man is on the firſt origin of ſociety), preſſed by ſuch numerous wants and paſſions, has no leiſure to admire the regular face of nature, or make inquiries concerning the cauſe of thoſe objects, to which from his infancy he has been gradually accuſtomed. On the contrary, the more regular and uniform, that is, the more perfect nature appears, the more is he familiarized to it, and the leſs inclined to ſcrutinize and examine it. A monſtrous birth excites his curioſity, and is deemed a prodigy. It alarms him from its novelty; and immediately ſets him a trembling, and ſacrificing, and praying. But an animal, complete in all its limbs and organs, is to him an ordinary ſpectacle, and produces no religious opinion or affection. Aſk him, whence that animal aroſe? he will tell you, from the copulation of its parents. And theſe, whence? From the copulation of theirs. A few removes ſatisfy his curioſity, and ſet the objects at ſuch a diſtance, that he entirely loſes ſight of them. Imagine not, that he will ſo much as ſtart

the queſtion, whence the firſt animal; much leſs, whence the whole ſyſtem or united fabric of the univerſe aroſe. Or if you ſtart ſuch a queſtion to him, expect not that he will employ his mind with any anxiety about a ſubject, ſo remote, ſo unintereſting, and which ſo much exceeds the bounds of his capacity.

But farther, if men were at firſt led into the belief of one Supreme Being, by reaſoning from the frame of nature, they could never poſſibly leave that belief, in order to embrace polytheiſm; but the ſame principles of reaſon, which at firſt produced and diffuſed over mankind ſo magnificent an opinion, muſt be able, with greater facility, to preſerve it. The firſt invention and proof of any doctrine is much more difficult than the ſupporting and retaining of it.

There is a great difference between hiſtorical facts and ſpeculative opinions; nor is the knowledge of the one propagated in the ſame manner with that of the other. A hiſtorical fact, while it paſſes by oral tradition from eye-witneſſes and contemporaries, is diſguiſed in every ſucceſſive narration, and may at laſt retain but very ſmall, if any, reſſemblance of the original truth on which it was founded. The frail memories of men, their love of exaggeration, their ſupine careleſſneſs; theſe principles, if not corrected by books and writing, ſoon pervert the account of hiſtorical events; where argument or reaſoning has little or no place, nor can ever recal the truth, which has once eſcaped thoſe narrations. It is thus the fables of Hercules, Theſeus, Bacchus, are

ſuppoſed to have been originally founded in true hiſtory, corrupted by tradition. But with regard to ſpeculative opinions, the caſe is far otherwiſe. If theſe opinions be founded on arguments ſo clear and obvious as to carry conviction with the generality of mankind, the ſame arguments which at firſt diffuſed the opinions, will ſtill preſerve them in their original purity. If the arguments be more abſtruſe, and more remote from vulgar apprehenſion, the opinions will always be confined to a few perſons; and as ſoon as men leave the contemplation of the arguments, the opinions will immediately be loſt and be buried in oblivion. Whichever ſide of this dilemma we take, it muſt appear impoſſible, that theiſm could, from reaſoning, have been the primary religion of human race, and have afterwards, by its corruption, given birth to polytheiſm, and to all the various ſuperſtitions of the heathen world. Reaſon, when obvious, prevents theſe corruptions: when abſtruſe, it keeps the principles entirely from the knowledge of the vulgar, who are alone liable to corrupt any principle or opinion.

Sect. II. *Origin of Polytheiſm.*

If we would, therefore, indulge our curioſity in inquiring concerning the origin of religion, we muſt turn our thoughts towards polytheiſm, the primitive religion of uninſtructed mankind.

Were men led into the apprehenſion of inviſible, intelligent power, by a contemplation of the works of nature, they could never poſſibly entertain any conception but of one ſingle being, who beſtowed

exiſtence and order on this vaſt machine, and adjuſted all its parts, according to one regular plan or connected ſyſtem. For though, to perſons of a certain turn of mind, it may not appear altogether abſurd, that ſeveral independent beings, endowed with ſuperior wiſdom, might conſpire in the contrivance and execution of one regular plan; yet is this a merely arbitrary ſuppoſition, which, even if allowed poſſible, muſt be confeſſed neither to be ſupported by probability nor neceſſity. All things in the univerſe are evidently of a piece. Every thing is adjuſted to every thing. One deſign prevails throughout the whole. And this uniformity leads the mind to acknowledge one author; becauſe the conception of different authors, without any diſtinction of attributes or operations, ſerves only to give perplexity to the imagination, without beſtowing any ſatisfaction on the underſtanding. The ſtatue of Laocoon, as we learn from Pliny, was the work of three artiſts: But it is certain that, were we not told ſo, we ſhould never have imagined that a groupe of figures, cut from one ſtone, and united in one plan, was not the work and contrivance of one ſtatuary. To aſcribe any ſingle effect to the combination of ſeveral cauſes, is not ſurely a natural and obvious ſuppoſition.

On the other hand, if, leaving the works of nature, we trace the footſteps of inviſible power in the various and contrary events of human life, we are neceſſarily led into polytheiſm, and to the acknowledgment of ſeveral limited and imperfect deities. Storms and tempeſts ruin what is nouriſhed by the

ſun. The ſun deſtroys what is foſtered by the moiſture of dews and rains. War may be favorable to a nation, whom the inclemency of the ſeaſons afflicts with famine. Sickneſs and peſtilence may depopulate a kingdom amidſt the moſt profuſe plenty. The ſame nation is not, at the ſame time, equally ſucceſsful by ſea and by land. And a nation which now triumphs over its enemies, may anon ſubmit to their more proſperous arms. In ſhort, the conduct of events, or what we call the plan of a particular providence, is ſo full of variety and uncertainty, that, if we ſuppoſe it immediately ordered by any intelligent beings, we muſt acknowledge a contrariety in their deſigns and intentions, a conſtant combat of oppoſite powers, and a repentance or change of intention in the ſame power, from impotence or levity. Each nation has its tutelar deity. Each element is ſubjected to its inviſible power or agent. The province of each god is ſeparate from that of another. Nor are the operations of the ſame god always certain and invariable. To-day he protects; to-morrow he abandons us. Prayers and ſacrifices, rites and ceremonies, well or ill performed, are the ſources of his favor or enmity, and produce all the good or ill fortune which are to be found amongſt mankind.

We may conclude, therefore, that, in all nations which have embraced polytheiſm, the firſt ideas of religion aroſe not from a contemplation of the works of nature, but from a concern with regard to the events of live, and from the inceſſant hopes and fears which actuate the human mind. Accordingly, we

find, that all idolaters, having ſeparated the provinces of their deities, have recourſe to that inviſible agent, to whoſe authority they are immediately ſubjected, and whoſe province it is to ſuperintend that courſe of actions in which they are at any time engaged Juno is invoked at marriages; Lucina at births. Neptune receives the prayers of ſeamen; and Mars of warriors. The huſbandman cultivates his field under the protection of Ceres; and the merchant acknowledges the authority of Mercury. Each natural event is ſuppoſed to be governed by ſome intelligent agent; and nothing proſperous or adverſe can happen in life, which may not be the ſubject of peculiar prayers or thankſgivings[1].

It muſt neceſſarily, indeed, be allowed, that, in order to carry men's attention beyond the preſent courſe of things, or lead them into any inference concerning inviſible intelligent power, they muſt be actuated by ſome paſſion which prompts their thought and reflection; ſome motive which urges their firſt inquiry. But what paſſion ſhall we here have recourſe to, for explaining an effect of ſuch mighty conſequence? Not ſpeculative curioſity ſurely, or the pure love of truth. That motive is too refined for ſuch groſs apprehenſions; and would lead men into inquiries concerning the frame of nature; a ſubject too large and comprehenſive for their narrow capacities. No paſſions, therefore, can be ſuppoſed to work upon ſuch barbarians but the ordinary affections of human life; the anxious concern for happineſs,

[1] See NOTE [A].

the dread of future miſery, the terror of death, the thirſt of revenge, the appetite for food and other neceſſaries. Agitated by hopes and fears of this nature, eſpecially the latter, men ſcrutinize, with a trembling curioſity, the courſe of future cauſes, and examine the various and contrary events of human life. And in this diſordered ſcene, with eyes ſtill more diſordered and aſtoniſhed, they ſee the firſt obſcure traces of divinity.

Sect. III. *The ſame Subject continued.*

We are placed in this world as in a great theatre, where the true ſprings and cauſes of every event are entirely concealed from us; nor have we either ſufficient wiſdom to foreſee, or power to prevent, thoſe ills with which we are continually threatened. We hang in perpetual ſuſpenſe between life and death, health and ſickneſs, plenty and want; which are diſtributed amongſt the human ſpecies by ſecret and unknown cauſes, whoſe operation is oft unexpected, and always unaccountable. Theſe *unknown cauſes*, then, become the conſtant object of our hope and fear; and while the paſſions are kept in perpetual alarm by an anxious expectation of the events, the imagination is equally employed in forming ideas of thoſe powers on which we have ſo entire a dependence. Could men anatomize nature according to the moſt probable, at leaſt the moſt intelligible philoſophy, they would find, that theſe cauſes are nothing but the particular fabric and ſtructure of the minute parts of their own bodies and of external

objects; and that, by a regular and conſtant machinery, all the events are produced about which they are ſo much concerned. But this philoſophy exceeds the comprehenſion of the ignorant multitude, who can only conceive the *unknown cauſes* in a general and confuſed manner; though their imagination, perpetually employed on the ſame ſubject, muſt labor to form ſome particular and diſtinct idea of them. The more they conſider theſe cauſes themſelves, and the uncertainty of their operation, the leſs ſatisfaction do they meet with in their reſearches; and, however unwilling, they muſt at laſt have abandoned ſo arduous an attempt, were it not for a propenſity in human nature, which leads into a ſyſtem that gives them ſome ſatisfaction.

There is an univerſal tendency among mankind to conceive all beings like themſelves, and to transfer to every object thoſe qualities with which they are familiarly acquainted, and of which they are intimately conſcious. We find human faces in the moon, armies in the clouds; and by a natural propenſity, if not corrected by experience and reflection, aſcribe malice or good will to every thing that hurts or pleaſes us. Hence the frequency and beauty of the *proſopopœia* in poetry; where trees, mountains, and ſtreams, are perſonified, and the inanimate parts of nature acquire ſentiment and paſſion. And though theſe poetical figures and expreſſions gain not on the belief, they may ſerve, at leaſt, to prove a certain tendency in the imagination, without which they could neither be beautiful nor natural. Nor is a river-god or hamadryad always

taken for a mere poetical or imaginary perſonage; but may ſometimes enter into the real creed of the ignorant vulgar; while each grove or field is repreſented as poſſeſſed of a particular *genius* or inviſible power, which inhabits and protects it. Nay, philoſophers cannot entirely exempt themſelves from this natural frailty; but have oft aſcribed to inanimate matter the horror of a *vacuum*, ſympathies, antipathies, and other affections of human nature. The abſurdity is not leſs while we caſt our eyes upwards; and transferring, as is too uſual, human paſſions and infirmities to the Deity, repreſent him as jealous and revengeful, capricious and partial, and, in ſhort, a wicked and fooliſh man, in every reſpect but his ſuperior power and authority. No wonder, then, that mankind, being placed in ſuch an abſolute ignorance of cauſes, and being at the ſame time ſo anxious concerning their future fortune, ſhould immediately acknowledge a dependence on inviſible powers, poſſeſſed of ſentiment and intelligence. The *unknown cauſes*, which continually employ their thought, appearing always in the ſame aſpect, are all apprehended to be of the ſame kind or ſpecies. Nor is it long before we aſcribe to them thought and reaſon and paſſion, and ſometimes even the limbs and figures of men, in order to bring them nearer to a reſemblance with ourſelves.

In proportion as any man's courſe of life is governed by accident, we always find, that he increaſes in ſuperſtition; as may particularly be obſerved of gameſters and ſailors; who, though, of all mankind, the leaſt capable of ſerious reflection, abound moſt in

frivolous and ſuperſtitious apprehenſions. The gods, ſays Coriolanus in Dionyſius [a], have an influence in every affair; but above all, in war; where the event is ſo uncertain. All human life, eſpecially before the inſtitution of order and good government, being ſubject to fortuitous accidents; it is natural, that ſuperſtition ſhould prevail every where in barbarous ages, and put men on the moſt earneſt inquiry concerning thoſe inviſible powers, who diſpoſe of their happineſs or miſery. Ignorant of aſtronomy and the anatomy of plants and animals, and too little curious to obſerve the admirable adjuſtment of final cauſes, they remain ſtill unacquainted with a firſt and ſupreme Creator, and with that infinitely perfect ſpirit, who alone, by his almighty will, beſtowed order on the whole frame of nature. Such a magnificent idea is too big for their narrow conceptions, which can neither obſerve the beauty of the work, nor comprehend the grandeur of its author. They ſuppoſe their deities, however potent and inviſible, to be nothing but a ſpecies of human creatures, perhaps raiſed from among mankind, and retaining all human paſſions and appetites, together with corporeal limbs and organs. Such limited beings, though maſters of human fate, being, each of them, incapable of extending his influence every where, muſt be vaſtly multiplied, in order to anſwer that variety of events which happen over the whole face of nature. Thus every place is ſtored with a crowd of local deities; and thus polytheiſm has

[a] Lib. viii.

prevailed, and ſtill prevails, among the greateſt part of uninſtructed mankind [1].

Any of the human affections may lead us into the notion of inviſible, intelligent power; hope as well as fear, gratitude as well as affliction: But if we examine our own hearts, or obſerve what paſſes around us, we ſhall find, that men are much oftener thrown on their knees by the melancholy than by the agreeable paſſions. Proſperity is eaſily received as our due, and few queſtions are aſked concerning its cauſe or author. It begets cheerfulneſs and activity and alacrity, and a lively enjoyment of every ſocial and ſenſual pleaſure: And during this ſtate of mind, men have little leiſure or inclination to think of the unknown inviſible regions. On the other hand, every diſaſtrous accident alarms us, and ſets us on inquiries concerning the principles whence it aroſe: Apprehenſions ſpring up with regard to futurity: And the mind, ſunk into diffidence, terror, and melancholy, has recourſe to every method of appeaſing thoſe ſecret intelligent powers, on whom our fortune is ſuppoſed entirely to depend.

No topic is more uſual with all popular divines

[1] The following lines of Euripides are ſo much to the preſent purpoſe, that I cannot forbear quoting them:

Ουκ εϛιν ὑδεν ϖιϛον, ὐτ ευδοξια,
Ουτ' αὐ καλως ϖραϲϲουϛα μη ϖραξειν κακως.
Φυρϐϲι δ' κυθ'οι θεοι ϖαλιν τε και ϖροσω,
Ταραγμον εντιθενϒες, ως αγνωϲια
Σεϐωμεν αὐϒς. HECUBA.

"There is nothing ſecure in the world; no glory, no proſ-
" perity. The gods toſs all life into confuſion; mix every thing
" with its reverſe; that all of us, from our ignorance and un-
" certainty, may pay them the more worſhip and reverence."

than to diſplay the advantages of affliction, in bringing men to a due ſenſe of religion; by ſubduing their confidence and ſenſuality, which, in times of proſperity, make them forgetful of a divine providence. Nor is this topic confined merely to modern religions. The ancients have alſo employed it. *Fortune has never liberally, without envy,* ſays a Greek hiſtorian [t], *beſtowed an unmixed happineſs on mankind; but with all her gifts has ever conjoined ſome diſaſtrous circumſtance, in order to chaſtiſe men into a reverence for the gods, whom, in a continued courſe of proſperity, they are apt to neglect and forget.*

What age or period of life is the moſt addicted to ſuperſtition? The weakeſt and moſt timid. What ſex? The ſame anſwer muſt be given. *The leaders and examples of every kind of ſuperſtition,* ſays Strabo [u], *are the women. Theſe excite the men to devotion and ſupplications, and the obſervance of religious days. It is rare to meet with one that lives apart from the females, and yet is addicted to ſuch practices. And nothing can, for this reaſon, be more improbable, than the account given of an order of men among the* Getes, *who practiſed celibacy, and were notwithſtanding the moſt religious fanatics.* A method of reaſoning, which would lead us to entertain a bad idea of the devotion of monks; did we not know by an experience, not ſo common, perhaps, in Strabo's days, that one may practice celibacy, and profeſs chaſtity; and yet maintain the cloſeſt connexions and moſt entire ſympathy with that timorous and pious ſex.

[t] Diod. Sic. lib. iii. [u] Lib. vii.

SECT. IV.

SECT. IV. *Deities not conſidered as creators or formers of the world.*

The only point of theology in which we ſhall find a conſent of mankind almoſt univerſal, is, that there is inviſible, intelligent power in the world: But whether this power be ſupreme or ſubordinate, whether confined to one being, or diſtributed among ſeveral, what attributes, qualities, connexions, or principles of action, ought to be aſcribed to thoſe beings; concerning all theſe points, there is the wideſt difference in the popular ſyſtems of theology. Our anceſtors in Europe, before the revival of letters, believed, as we do at preſent, that there was one ſupreme God, the author of nature, whoſe power, though in itſelf uncontrollable, was yet often exerted by the interpoſition of his angels and ſubordinate miniſters, who executed his ſacred purpoſes. But they alſo believed, that all nature was full of other inviſible powers; fairies, goblins, elves, ſprights; beings ſtronger and mightier than men, but much inferior to the celeſtial natures, who ſurround the throne of God. Now, ſuppoſe that any one, in thoſe ages, had denied the exiſtence of God and of his angels; would not his impiety juſtly have deſerved the appellation of atheiſm, even though he had ſtill allowed, by ſome odd capricious reaſoning, that the popular ſtories of elves and fairies were juſt and well-grounded? The difference, on the one hand, between ſuch a perſon and a genuine theiſt is infinitely greater than that, on the other, between him and one that abſolutely excludes

all inviſible intelligent power. And it is a fallacy, merely from the caſual reſemblance of names, without any conformity of meaning, to rank ſuch oppoſite opinions under the ſame denomination.

To any one who conſiders juſtly of the matter it will appear, that the gods of all polytheiſts are no better than the elves or fairies of our anceſtors, and merit as little any pious worſhip or veneration. Theſe pretended religioniſts are really a kind of ſuperſtitious atheiſts, and acknowledge no being that correſponds to our idea of a deity. No firſt principle of mind or thought: No ſupreme government and adminiſtration: No divine contrivance or intention in the fabric of the world.

The Chineſe, when [6] their prayers are not anſwered, beat their idols. The deities of the Laplanders are any large ſtone which they meet with of an extraordinary ſhape [7]. The Egyptian mythologiſts, in order to account for animal worſhip, ſaid, that the gods, purſued by the violence of earth-born men, who were their enemies, had formerly been obliged to diſguiſe themſelves under the ſemblance of beaſts [8]. The Caunii, a nation in the Leſſer Aſia, reſolving to admit no ſtrange gods among them, regularly, at certain ſeaſons, aſſembled themſelves completely armed, beat the air with their lances, and proceeded in that manner to their frontiers; in order, as they

[6] Pere le Compte.

[7] Regnard, Voyage de Laponie.

[8] Did. Sic. lib. i. Lucian de Sacrificiis. Ovid alludes to the ſame tradition, Metam. lib. v. l. 321. So alſo Manilius, lib. iv.

ſaid, to expel the foreign deities [9]. *Not even the immortal gods*, ſaid ſome German nations to Cæſar, *are a match for the* Suevi [10].

Many ills, ſays Dione in Homer to Venus wounded by Diomede, many ills, my daughter, have the gods inflicted on men: And many ills, in return, have men inflicted on the gods [11]. We need but open any claſſic author to meet with theſe groſs repreſentations of the deities; and Longinus [12] with reaſon obſerves, that ſuch ideas of the divine nature, if literally taken, contain a true atheiſm.

Some writers [13] have been ſurpriſed, that the impieties of Ariſtophanes ſhould have been tolerated, nay publicly acted and applauded by the Athenians; a people ſo ſuperſtitious and ſo jealous of the public religion, that, at that very time, they put Socrates to death for his imagined incredulity. But theſe writers do not conſider, that the ludicrous, familiar images, under which the gods are repreſented by that comic poet, inſtead of appearing impious, were the genuine lights in which the ancients conceived their divinities. What conduct can be more criminal or mean, than that of Jupiter in the Amphitrion? Yet that play, which repreſented his gallant exploits, was ſuppoſed ſo agreeable to him, that it was always acted in Rome by public authority, when the ſtate

[9] Herodot. lib. i.

[10] Cæſ. Comment. de bello Gallico, lib. iv.

[11] Lib. ix. 382. [12] Cap. ix.

[13] Pere Brumoy, Théâtre des Grecs; & Fontenelle, Hiſtoire des Oracles.

was threatened with peſtilence, famine, or any general calamity [14]. The Romans ſuppoſed, that, like all old lechers, he would be highly pleaſed with the recital of his former feats of proweſs and vigor, and that no topic was ſo proper upon which to flatter his vanity.

The Lacedemonians, ſays Xenophon [15], always, during war, put up their petitions very early in the morning, in order to be before-hand with their enemies, and, by being the firſt ſolicitors, pre-engage the gods in their favor. We may gather from Seneca [16], that it was uſual for the votaries in the temples to make intereſt with the beadle or ſexton, that they might have a ſeat near the image of the deity, in order to be the beſt heard in their prayers and applications to him. The Tyrians, when beſieged by Alexander, threw chains on the ſtatue of Hercules, to prevent that deity from deſerting to the enemy [17]. Auguſtus, having twice loſt his fleet by ſtorms, forbad Neptune to be carried in proceſſion along with the other gods; and fancied, that he had ſufficiently revenged himſelf by that expedient [18]. After Germanicus's death, the people were ſo enraged at their gods, that they ſtoned them in their temples; and openly renounced all allegiance to them [19].

[14] Arnob. Lib. vii.
[15] De Laced. Rep.
[16] Epiſt. xli.
[17] Quint. Curtius, lib. iv. cap. 3. Diod. Sic. lib. xvii.
[18] Suet. in vita Aug. cap. 16.
[19] Id. in vita Cal. cap. 5.

To aſcribe the origin and fabric of the univerſe to theſe imperfect beings, never enters into the imagination of any polytheiſt or idolater. Heſiod, whoſe writings, with thoſe of Homer, contained the canonical ſyſtem of the heathens [20]; Heſiod, I ſay, ſuppoſes gods and men to have ſprung equally from the unknown powers of nature [21]. And throughout the whole theogony of that author, Pandora is the only inſtance of creation, or a voluntary production; and ſhe too was formed by the gods merely from deſpight to Prometheus, who had furniſhed men with ſtolen fire from the celeſtial regions [22]. The ancient mythologiſts, indeed, ſeem throughout to have rather embraced the idea of generation than that of creation or formation; and to have thence accounted for the origin of this univerſe.

Ovid, who lived in a learned age, and had been inſtructed by philoſophers in the principles of a divine creation or formation of the world; finding that ſuch an idea would not agree with the popular mythology which he delivers, leaves it, in a manner, looſe and detached from his ſyſtem. *Quiſquis fuit ille Deorum* [23]? Which-ever of the gods it was, ſays he, that diſſipated the chaos, and introduced order into the univerſe. It could neither be Saturn, he knew, nor Jupiter, nor Neptune, nor any of the received deities of paganiſm. His theological ſyſtem

[20] Herodot. lib. ii. Lucian. *Jupiter confutatus*, *de luctu*, *Saturn.* &c.

[21] Ὡς ομοθεν γεγαασι θεοι θνητοι τ' ανθρωποι. Heſ. Opera & Dies, l. 108.

[22] Theog. l. 570. [23] Metamorph. lib. i. 32.

had taught him nothing upon that head; and he leaves the matter equally undetermined.

Diodorus Siculus[24], beginning his work with an enumeration of the moſt reaſonable opinions concerning the origin of the world, makes no mention of a deity or intelligent mind; though it is evident from his hiſtory, that he was much more prone to ſuperſtition than to irreligion. And in another paſſage[25], talking of the Ichthyophagi, a nation in India, he ſays, that, there being ſo great difficulty in accounting for their deſcent, we muſt conclude them to be *aborigines*, without any beginning of their generation, propagating their race from all eternity; as ſome of the phyſiologers, in treating of the origin of nature, have juſtly obſerved. "But in ſuch ſubjects "as theſe," adds the hiſtorian, "which exceed all "human capacity, it may well happen, that thoſe "who diſcourſe the moſt know the leaſt; reaching a "ſpecious appearance of truth in their reaſonings, "while extremely wide of the real truth and matter "of fact."

A ſtrange ſentiment in our eyes, to be embraced by a profeſſed and zealous religioniſt[26]! But it was merely by accident, that the queſtion concerning the origin of the world did ever in ancient times enter into religious ſyſtems, or was treated of by theologers.

[24] Lib. i. [25] Id. ibid.

[26] The ſame author, who can thus account for the origin of the world without a Deity, eſteems it impious to explain, from phyſical cauſes, the common accidents of life, earthquakes, inundations, and tempeſts; and devoutly aſcribes theſe to the anger of Jupiter or Neptune. A plain proof whence he derived his ideas of religion. See lib. xv. p. 364. Ex edit. Rhodomanni.

The philoſophers alone made profeſſion of delivering ſyſtems of this kind; and it was pretty late too before theſe bethought themſelves of having recourſe to a mind, or ſupreme intelligence, as the firſt cauſe of all. So far was it from being eſteemed profane in thoſe days to account for the origin of things without a Deity, that Thales, Anaximenes Heraclitus, and others, who embraced that ſyſtem of coſmogony, paſt unqueſtioned; while Anaxagoras, the firſt undoubted theiſt among the philoſophers, was perhaps the firſt that ever was accuſed of atheiſm [27].

We are told by Sextus Empiricus [28], that Epicurus, when a boy, reading with his preceptor theſe verſes of Heſiod.

Eldeſt of beings *chaos* firſt aroſe;
Next *earth*, wide-ſtretch'd, the *ſeat* of all:

the young ſcholar firſt betrayed his inquiſitive genius, by aſking, *And chaos whence?* But was told by his preceptor, that he muſt have recourſe to the philoſophers for a ſolution of ſuch queſtions. And from this hint Epicurus left philology and all other ſtudies, in order to betake himſelf to that ſcience, whence alone he expected ſatisfaction with regard to theſe ſublime ſubjects.

The common people were never likely to puſh their reſearches ſo far, or derive from reaſoning their ſyſtems of religion; when philologers and mythologiſts, we ſee, ſcarcely ever diſcovered ſo much penetration. And even the philoſophers

[27] See NOTE [B]. [28] Adverſus Mathem. lib. ix.

who diſcourſed on ſuch topics, readily aſſented to the groſſeſt theory, and admitted the joint origin of gods and men from night and chaos, from fire, water, air, or watever they eſtabliſhed to be the ruling element.

Nor was it only on their firſt origin that the gods were ſuppoſed dependent on the powers of nature. Throughout the whole period of their exiſtence they were ſubjected to the dominion of fate or deſtiny. "Think of the force of neceſſity," ſays Agrippa to the Roman people; "that force to which even the "gods muſt ſubmit[29]." And the younger Pliny[30], agreeably to this way of thinking, tells us, that amidſt the darkneſs, horror, and confuſion, which enſued upon the firſt eruption of Veſuvius, ſeveral concluded, that all nature was going to wreck, and that gods and men were periſhing in one common ruin.

It is great complaiſance, indeed, if we dignify with the name of religion ſuch an imperfect ſyſtem of theology, and put it on a level with later ſyſtems which are founded on principles more juſt and more ſublime. For my part, I can ſcarcely allow the principles even of Marcus Aurelius, Plutarch, and ſome other *Stoics* and *Academics*, though much more refined than the pagan ſuperſtition, to be worthy of the honorable appellation of theiſm. For if the mythology of the heathens reſemble the ancient European ſyſtem of ſpiritual beings, excluding God and angels, and leaving only fairies and ſprights; the creed

[29] Dionys. Halic. lib. vi. [30] Epiſt. lib. vi.

of theſe philoſophers may juſtly be ſaid to exclude a deity, and to leave only angels and fairies.

Sect. V. *Various Forms of Polytheiſm: Allegory, Hero-Worſhip.*

But it is chiefly our preſent buſineſs to conſider the groſs polytheiſm of the vulgar, and to trace all its various appearances, in the principles of human nature, whence they are derived.

Whoever learns by argument the exiſtence of inviſible intelligent power, muſt reaſon from the admirable contrivance of natural objects, and muſt ſuppoſe the world to be the workmanſhip of that divine being, the original cauſe of all things. But the vulgar polytheiſt ſo far from admitting that idea, deifies every part of the univerſe, and conceives all the conſpicuous productions of nature, to be themſelves ſo many real divinities. The ſun, moon, and ſtars, are all gods according to his ſyſtem: Fountains are inhabited by nymphs, and trees by hamadryads: Even monkies, dogs, cats, and other animals, often become ſacred in his eyes; and ſtrike him with a religious veneration. And thus, however ſtrong men's propenſity to believe inviſible, intelligent power in nature, their propenſity is equally ſtrong to reſt their attention on ſenſible, viſible objects; and in order to reconcile theſe oppoſite inclinations, they are led to unite the inviſible power with ſome viſible object.

The diſtribution alſo of diſtinct provinces to the ſeveral deities is apt to cauſe ſome allegory, both phyſical and moral, to enter into the vulgar ſyſtems

of polytheiſm. The god of war will naturally be repreſented as furious, cruel, and impetuous: The god of poetry as elegant, polite, and amiable: The god of merchandiſe, eſpecially in early times, as thieviſh and deceitful. The allegories, ſuppoſed in Homer and other mythologiſts, I allow have often been ſo ſtrained, that men of ſenſe are apt entirely to reject them, and to conſider them as the production merely of the fancy and conceit of critics and commentators. But that allegory really has place in the heathen mythology is undeniable even on the leaſt reflection. Cupid the ſon of Venus; the Muſes the daughters of Memory; Prometheus, the wiſe brother, and Epimetheus the fooliſh; Hygieia, or the goddeſs of health, deſcended from Eſculapius or the god of phyſic: Who ſees not, in theſe, and in many other inſtances, the plain traces of allegory? When a god is ſuppoſed to preſide over any paſſion, event, or ſyſtem of actions, it is almoſt unavoidable to give him a genealogy, attributes, and adventures, ſuitable to his ſuppoſed powers and influence; and to carry on that ſimilitude and compariſon, which is naturally ſo agreeable to the mind of man.

Allegories, indeed, entirely perfect, we ought not to expect as the productions of ignorance and ſuperſtition; there being no work of genius that requires a nicer hand, or has been more rarely executed with ſucceſs. That *Fear* and *Terror* are the ſons of Mars is juſt; but why by Venus [29]? That *Harmony* is the

[29] Heſiod. Theog. l. 935.

daughter of Venus is regular; but why by Mars [32]? That *Sleep* is the brother of *Death* is ſuitable; but why deſcribe him as enamoured of one of the Graces [33]? And ſince the ancient mythologiſts fall into miſtakes ſo groſs and palpable; we have no reaſon ſurely to expect ſuch refined and long-ſpun allegories, as ſome have endeavoured to deduce from their fictions.

Lucretius was plainly ſeduced by the ſtrong appearance of allegory, which is obſervable in the pagan fictions. He firſt addreſſes himſelf to Venus, as to that generating power which animates, renews, and beautifies the univerſe: but is ſoon betrayed by the mythology into incoherencies, while he prays to that allegorical perſonage to appeaſe the furies of her lover Mars: An idea not drawn from allegory, but from the popular religion, and which Lucretius, as an Epicurean, could not conſiſtently admit of.

The deities of the vulgar are ſo little ſuperior to human creatures, that, where men are affected with ſtrong ſentiments of veneration or gratitude for any hero or public benefactor, nothing can be more natural than to convert him into a god, and fill the heavens, after this manner, with continual recruits from among mankind. Moſt of the divinities of the ancient world are ſuppoſed to have once been men, and to have been beholden for their *apotheoſis* to the admiration and affection of the people. The real hiſtory of their adventures, corrupted by tradition and elevated by the marvellous, became a plentiful

[32] Heſiod. Theog. et Plut. in vita Pelop.
[33] Iliad. xiv. 267.

ſource of fable; eſpecially in paſſing through the hands of poets, allegoriſts, and prieſts, who ſucceſſively improved upon the wonder and aſtoniſhment of the ignorant multitude.

Painters too and ſculptors came in for their ſhare of profit in the ſacred myſteries; and furniſhing men with ſenſible repreſentations of their divinities, whom they clothed in human figures, gave great increaſe to the public devotion, and determined its object. It was probably for want of theſe arts in rude and barbarous ages, that men deified plants, animals, and even brute, unorganized matter; and rather than be without a ſenſible object of worſhip; affixed divinity to ſuch ungainly forms. Could any ſtatuary of Syria, in early times, have formed a juſt figure of Apollo, the conic ſtone, Heliogabalus, had never become the object of ſuch profound adoration, and been received as the repreſentation of the ſolar deity [35].

Stilpo was baniſhed by the council of Areopagus, for affirming that the Minerva in the citadel was no divinity, but the workmanſhip of Phidias the ſculptor [36]. What degree of reaſon muſt we expect in the religious belief of the vulgar in other nations, when Athenians and Areopagites could entertain ſuch groſs conceptions?

[35] Herodian. lib. v. Jupiter Ammon is repreſented by Curtius as a deity of the ſame kind, lib. iv. cap. 7. The Arabians and Peſſinuntians adored alſo ſhapeleſs unformed ſtones as their deity. Arnob. lib. vi. So much did their folly exceed that of the Egyptians.

[36] Diog. Laert. lib. ii.

Theſe then are the general principles of polytheiſm, founded in human nature, and little or nothing dependent on caprice and accident. As the *cauſes*, which beſtow happineſs or miſery, are in general very little known and very uncertain, our anxious concern endeavours to attain a determinate idea of them; and finds no better expedient than to repreſent them as intelligent voluntary agents, like ourſelves; only ſomewhat ſuperior in power and wiſdom. The limited influence of theſe agents, and their great proximity to human weakneſs, introduce the various diſtribution and diviſion of their authority; and thereby give riſe to allegory. The ſame principles naturally deify mortals, ſuperior in power, courage, or underſtanding, and produce hero-worſhip; together with fabulous hiſtory and mythological tradition, in all its wild and unaccountable forms. And as an inviſible ſpiritual intelligence is an object too refined for vulgar apprehenſion, men naturally affix it to ſome ſenſible repreſentation; ſuch as either the more conſpicuous parts of nature, or the ſtatues, images, and pictures, which a more refined age forms of its divinities.

Almoſt all idolaters, of whatever age or country, concur in theſe general principles and conceptions; and even the particular characters and provinces, which they aſſign to their deities, are not extremely different [37]. The Greek and Roman travellers and conquerors, without much difficulty, found their own deities every where; and ſaid, this is Mercury,

[37] See Cæſar of the religion of the Gauls, De bello Gallico, lib. xi.

that Venus; this Mars, that Neptune; by whatever title the ſtrange gods might be denominated. The goddeſs Hertha of our Saxon anceſtors ſeems to be no other, according to Tacitus [38], than the *Mater Tellus* of the Romans; and his conjecture was evidently juſt.

Sect. VI. *Origin of Theiſm from Polytheiſm.*

The doctrine of one ſupreme Deity, the Author of Nature, is very ancient, has ſpread itſelf over great and populous nations, and among them has been embraced by all ranks and conditions of men: But whoever thinks that it has owed its ſucceſs to the prevalent force of thoſe invincible reaſons, on which it is undoubtedly founded, would ſhow himſelf little acquainted with the ignorance and ſtupidity of the people, and their incurable prejudices in favor of their particular ſuperſtitions. Even at this day, and in Europe, aſk any of the vulgar, why he believes in an omnipotent Creator of the world; he will never mention the beauty of final cauſes, of which he is wholly ignorant: He will not hold out his hand, and bid you contemplate the ſuppleneſs and variety of joints in his fingers, their bending all one way, the counterpoiſe which they receive from the thumb, the ſoftneſs and fleſhy parts of the inſide of his hand, with all the other circumſtances which render that member fit for the uſe to which it was deſtined. To theſe he has been long accuſtomed;

[38] De Moribus Germ.

and he beholds them with liſtleſſneſs and unconcern. He will tell you of the ſudden and unexpected death of ſuch a one; the fall and bruiſe of ſuch another; the exceſſive drought of this ſeaſon; the cold and rains of another. Theſe he aſcribes to the immediate operation of Providence: and ſuch events as, with good reaſoners, are the chief difficulties in admitting a ſupreme Intelligence, are with him the ſole arguments for it.

Many theiſts, even the moſt zealous and refined, have denied a *particular* providence, and have aſſerted, that the ſovereign mind, or firſt principle of all things, having fixed general laws by which nature is governed, gives free and uninterrupted courſe to theſe laws, and diſturbs not, at every turn, the ſettled order of events by particular volitions. From the beautiful connexion, ſay they, and rigid obſervance of eſtabliſhed rules, we draw the chief argument for theiſm; and from the ſame principles are enabled to anſwer the principal objections againſt it. But ſo little is this underſtood by the generality of mankind, that, wherever they obſerve any one to aſcribe all events to natural cauſes, and to remove the particular interpoſition of a Deity, they are apt to ſuſpect him of the groſſeſt infidelity. *A little philoſophy*, ſays Lord Bacon, *makes men atheiſts; a great deal reconciles them to religion.* For men, being taught by ſuperſtitious prejudices to lay the ſtreſs on a wrong place, when that fails them, and they diſcover, by a little reflection, that the courſe of nature is regular and uniform, their whole faith totters, and falls to ruin. But being taught, by more reflection, that

this very regularity and uniformity is the ſtrongeſt proof of deſign and of a ſupreme intelligence, they return to that belief which they had deſerted; and they are now able to eſtabliſh it on a firmer and more durable foundation.

Convulſions in nature, diſorders, prodigies, miracles, though the moſt oppoſite to the plan of a wiſe ſuperintendent, impreſs mankind with the ſtrongeſt ſentiments of religion; the cauſes of events ſeeming then the moſt unknown and unaccountable. Madneſs, fury, rage, and an inflamed imagination, though they ſink men neareſt to the level of beaſts, are, for a like reaſon, often ſuppoſed to be the only diſpoſitions in which we can have any immediate communication with the Deity.

We may conclude, therefore, upon the whole, that ſince the vulgar, in nations which have embraced the doctrine of theiſm, ſtill build it upon irrational and ſuperſtitious principles, they are never led into that opinion by any proceſs of argument, but by a certain train of thinking, more ſuitable to their genius and capacity.

It may readily happen, in an idolatrous nation, that though men admit the exiſtence of ſeveral limited deities, yet is there ſome one God, whom, in a particular manner, they make the object of their worſhip and adoration. They may either ſuppoſe that, in the diſtribution of power and territory among the gods, their nation was ſubjected to the juriſdiction of that particular deity; or reducing heavenly objects to the model of things below, they may

repreſent

repreſent one God as the prince or ſupreme magiſtrate of the reſt, who, though of the ſame nature, rules them with an authority like that which an earthly ſovereign exerciſes over his ſubjects and vaſſals. Whether this god, therefore, be conſidered as their peculiar patron, or as the general ſovereign of heaven, his votaries will endeavour, by every art, to inſinuate themſelves into his favor; and ſuppoſing him to be pleaſed, like themſelves, with praiſe and flattery, there is no eulogy or exaggeration which will be ſpared in their addreſſes to him. In proportion as men's fears or diſtreſſes become more urgent, they ſtill invent new ſtrains of adulation; and even he who outdoes his predeceſſor in ſwelling up the titles of his divinity, is ſure to be outdone by his ſucceſſor in newer and more pompous epithets of praiſe. Thus they proceed, till at laſt they arrive at infinity itſelf; beyond which there is no farther progreſs: And it is well if, in ſtriving to get farther, and to repreſent a magnificent ſimplicity, they run not into inexplicable myſtery, and deſtroy the intelligent nature of their deity, on which alone any rational worſhip or adoration can be founded. While they confine themſelves to the notion of a perfect being, the Creator of the world, they coincide, by chance, with the principles of reaſon and true philoſophy; though they are guided to that notion, not by reaſon, of which they are in a great meaſure incapable, but by the adulation and fears of the moſt vulgar ſuperſtition.

We often find, amongſt barbarous nations, and even ſometimes among civilized, that when every

ſtrain of flattery has been exhauſted towards arbitrary princes, when every human quality has been applauded to the utmoſt; their ſervile courtiers repreſent them at laſt as real divinities, and point them out to the people as objects of adoration. How much more natural therefore is it, that a limited deity, who at firſt is ſuppoſed only the immediate author of the particular goods and ills in life, ſhould in the end be repreſented as ſovereign maker and modifier of the univerſe?

Even where this notion of a ſupreme deity is already eſtabliſhed; though it ought naturally to leſſen every other worſhip, and abaſe every object of reverence; yet if a nation has entertained the opinion of a ſubordinate tutelar divinity, ſaint, or angel, their addreſſes to that being gradually riſe upon them, and encroach on the adoration due to their ſupreme deity. The Virgin Mary, ere checked by the reformation, had proceeded, from being merely a good woman, to uſurp many attributes of the Almighty: God and St Nicholas go hand in hand, in all the prayers and petitions of the Muſcovites.

Thus the deity who, from love, converted himſelf into a bull, in order to carry off Europa, and who, from ambition, dethroned his father Saturn, became the Optimus Maximus of the heathens. Thus the God of Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, became the ſupreme deity or Jehovah of the Jews.

The Jacobins, who denied the immaculate conception, have ever been very unhappy in their doctrine, even though political reaſons have kept the Romiſh church from condemning it. The Cordeliers

have run away with all the popularity. But in the fifteenth century, as we learn from Boulainvilliers [19], an Italian Cordelier maintained, that during the three days when Chriſt was interred, the hypoſtatic union was diſſolved, and that his human nature was not a proper object of adoration during that period. Without the art of divination, one might foretel, that ſo groſs and impious a blaſphemy would not fail to be anathematized by the people. It was the occaſion of great inſults on the part of the Jacobins; who now got ſome recompence for their misfortunes in the war about the immaculate conception.

Rather than relinquiſh this propenſity to adulation, religioniſts, in all ages, have involved themſelves in the greateſt abſurdities and contradictions.

Homer, in one paſſage, calls Oceanus and Tethys the original parents of all things, conformably to the eſtabliſhed mythology and tradition of the Greeks: yet in other paſſages, he could not forbear complimenting Jupiter, the reigning deity, with that magnificent appellation; and accordingly denominates him the father of gods and men. He forgets, that every temple, every ſtreet, was full of the anceſtors, uncles, brothers, and ſiſters of this Jupiter; who was in reality nothing but an upſtart parricide and uſurper. A like contradiction is obſervable in Heſiod; and is ſo much the leſs excuſable, as his profeſſed intention was to deliver a true genealogy of the gods.

[19] Hiſtoire abrégée, p. 499.

Were there a religion (and we may ſuſpect Mahometaniſm of this inconſiſtence) which ſometimes painted the Deity in the moſt ſublime colors as the Creator of heaven and earth; ſometimes degraded him nearly to a level with human creatures in his powers and faculties; while at the ſame time it aſcribed to him ſuitable infirmities, paſſions, and partialities of the moral kind: That religion, after it was extinct, would alſo be cited as an inſtance of thoſe contradictions, which ariſe from the groſs, vulgar, natural conceptions of mankind, oppoſed to their continual propenſity towards flattery and exaggeration. Nothing indeed would prove more ſtrongly the divine origin of any religion, than to find (and happily this is the caſe with Chriſtianity) that it is free from a contradiction, ſo incident to human nature.

Sect. VII. *Confirmation of this Doctrine.*

It appears certain, that though the original notions of the vulgar repreſent the Divinity as a limited being, and conſider him only as the particular cauſe of health or ſickneſs, plenty or want, proſperity or adverſity; yet when more magnificent ideas are urged upon them, they eſteem it dangerous to refuſe their aſſent. Will you ſay that your deity is finite and bounded in his perfections; may be overcome by a greater force; is ſubject to human paſſions, pains, and infirmities; has a beginning, and may have an end? This they dare not affirm; but thinking it ſafeſt to comply with the higher encomiums,

they endeavour, by an affected raviſhment and devotion, to ingratiate themſelves with him. As a confirmation of this, we may obſerve, that the aſſent of the vulgar is, in this caſe, merely verbal, and that they are incapable of conceiving thoſe ſublime qualities which they ſeemingly attribute to the Deity. Their real idea of him, notwithſtanding their pompous language, is ſtill as poor and frivolous as ever.

That original intelligence, ſays the Magians, who is the firſt principle of all things, diſcovers himſelf *immediately* to the mind and underſtanding alone; but has placed the ſun as his image in the viſible univerſe; and when that bright luminary diffuſes its beams over the earth and the firmament, it is a faint copy of the glory which reſides in the higher heavens. If you would eſcape the diſpleaſure of this Divine being, you muſt be careful never to ſet your bare foot upon the ground, nor ſpit into a fire, nor throw any water upon it, even though it were conſuming a whole city [40]. Who can expreſs the perfections of the Almighty? ſay the Mahometans. Even the nobleſt of his works, if compared to him, are but duſt and rubbiſh. How much more muſt human conception fall ſhort of his infinite perfections? His ſmile and favor render men for ever happy; and to obtain it for your children, the beſt method is to cut off from them, while infants, a little bit of ſkin, about half the breadth of a farthing. Take two bits of cloth [41], ſay the Roman

[40] Hyde, de Relig. veterum Perſarum.
[41] Called the Scapulaire.

Catholics, about an inch or an inch and a half ſquare; join them by the corners with two ſtrings or pieces of tape about ſixteen inches long; throw this over your head, and make one of the bits of cloth lie upon your breaſt, and the other upon your back, keeping them next your ſkin: there is not a better ſecret for recommending yourſelf to that infinite Being, who exiſts from eternity to eternity.

The Getes, commonly called immortal, from their ſteady belief of the ſoul's immortality, were genuine theiſts and unitarians. They affirmed Zamolxis, their deity, to be the only true god; and aſſerted the worſhip of all other nations to be addreſſed to mere fictions and chimeras. But were their religious principles any more refined on account of theſe magnificent pretenſions? Every fifth year they ſacrificed a human victim, whom they ſent as a meſſenger to their deity, in order to inform him of their wants and neceſſities. And when it thundered, they were ſo provoked, that in order to return the defiance, they let fly arrows at him, and declined not the combat as unequal. Such at leaſt is the account which Herodotus gives of the theiſm of the immortal Getes [42].

[42] Lib. iv.

Sect. VIII. *Flux and Reflux of Polytheiſm and Theiſm.*

It is remarkable, that the principles of religion have a kind of flux and reflux in the human mind, and that men have a natural tendency to riſe from idolatry to theiſm, and to ſink again from theiſm into idolatry. The vulgar, that is, indeed, all mankind, a few excepted, being ignorant and uninſtructed, never elevate their contemplation to the heavens, or penetrate by their diſquiſitions into the ſecret ſtructure of vegetable or animal bodies; ſo far as to diſcover a ſupreme mind or original providence, which beſtowed order on every part of nature. They conſider theſe admirable works in a more confined and ſelfiſh view; and finding their own happineſs and miſery to depend on the ſecret influence and unforeſeen concurrence of external objects, they regard, with perpetual attention, the *unknown cauſes* which govern all theſe natural events, and diſtribute pleaſure and pain, good and ill, by their powerful, but ſilent, operation. The unknown cauſes are ſtill appealed to on every emergence; and in this general appearance or confuſed image; are the perpetual objects of human hopes and fears, wiſhes and apprehenſions. By degrees, the active imagination of men, uneaſy in this abſtract conception of objects, about which it is inceſſantly employed, begins to render them more particular, and to clothe them in ſhapes more ſuitable to its natural comprehenſion. It repreſents them to be ſenſible, intelligent beings, like mankind; actuated by love and hatred, and

flexible by gifts and entreaties, by prayers and ſacrifices. Hence the origin of religion; and hence the origin of idolatry or polytheiſm.

But the ſame anxious concern for happineſs, which begets the idea of theſe inviſible, intelligent powers, allows not mankind to remain long in the firſt ſimple conception of them; as powerful, but limited, beings; maſters of human fate, but ſlaves to deſtiny and the courſe of nature. Men's exaggerated praiſes and compliments ſtill ſwell their idea upon them; and elevating their deities to the utmoſt bounds of perfection, at laſt beget the attributes of unity and infinity, ſimplicity and ſpirituality. Such refined ideas, being ſomewhat diſproportioned to vulgar comprehenſion, remain not long in their original purity; but require to be ſupported by the notion of inferior mediators or ſubordinate agents, which interpoſe between mankind and their ſupreme deity. Theſe demigods or middle beings, partaking more of human nature, and being more familiar to us, become the chief objects of devotion, and gradually recal that idolatry, which had been formerly baniſhed by the ardent prayers and panegyrics of timorous and indigent mortals. But as theſe idolatrous religions fall every day into groſſer and more vulgar conceptions, they at laſt deſtroy themſelves, and, by the vile repreſentations which they form of their deities, make the tide turn again towards theiſm. But ſo great is the propenſity, in this alternate revolution of human ſentiments, to return back to idolatry, that the utmoſt precaution is not able effectually to prevent it. And of this, ſome atheiſts, particularly the

Jews and Mahometans, have been ſenſible; as appears by their baniſhing all the arts of ſtatuary and painting, and not allowing the repreſentations, even of human figures, to be taken by marble or colors; leſt the common infirmity of mankind ſhould thence produce idolatry. The feeble apprehenſions of men cannot be ſatisfied with conceiving their deity as a pure ſpirit and perfect intelligence; and yet their natural terrors keep them from imputing to him the leaſt ſhadow of limitation and imperfection. They fluctuate between theſe oppoſite ſentiments. The ſame infirmity ſtill drags them downwards, from an omnipotent and ſpiritual deity, to a limited and corporeal one, and from a corporeal and limited deity to a ſtatue or viſible repreſentation. The ſame endeavour at elevation ſtill puſhes them upwards, from the ſtatue or material image to the inviſible power; and from the inviſible power to an infinitely perfect deity, the Creator and Sovereign of the univerſe.

Sect. IX. *Compariſon of theſe Religions, with regard to Perſecution and Toleration.*

Polytheiſm or idolatrous worſhip, being founded entirely in vulgar traditions, is liable to this great inconvenience, that any practice or opinion, however barbarous or corrupted, may be authorized by it; and full ſcope is given for knavery to impoſe on credulity, till morals and humanity be expelled the religious ſyſtems of mankind. At the ſame time, idolatry is attended with this evident advantage, that, by limiting the powers and functions of its deities,

it naturally admits the gods of other ſects and nations to a ſhare of divinity, and renders all the various deities, as well as rites, ceremonies, or traditions, compatible with each other[41]. Theiſm is oppoſite both in its advantages and diſadvantages. As that ſyſtem ſuppoſes one ſole deity, the perfection of reaſon and goodneſs, it ſhould, if juſtly proſecuted, baniſh every thing frivolous, unreaſonable, or inhuman, from religious worſhip, and ſet before men the moſt illuſtrious example, as well as the moſt commanding motives, of juſtice and benevolence. Theſe mighty advantages are not indeed over balanced (for that is not poſſible), but ſomewhat diminiſhed, by inconveniences, which ariſe from the vices and prejudices of mankind. While one ſole object of devotion is acknowledged, the worſhip of other deities is regarded as abſurd and impious. Nay, this unity of object ſeems naturally to require the unity of faith and ceremonies, and furniſhes deſigning men with a pretence for repreſenting their adverſaries as profane, and the objects of divine as well as human vengeance. For as each ſect is poſitive that its own faith and worſhip are entirely acceptable to the Deity, and as no one can conceive that the ſame being ſhould be pleaſed with different and oppoſite rites and principles; the ſeveral ſects fall naturally into animoſity, and mutually diſcharge on each other that ſacred zeal and rancor, the moſt furious and implacable of all human paſſions.

The tolerating ſpirit of idolaters, both in ancient and modern times, is very obvious to any one, who

[41] See NOTE [C].

is the leaſt converſant in the writings of hiſtorians or travellers. When the oracle of Delphi was aſked, what rites or worſhip was moſt acceptable to the gods? Thoſe which are legally eſtabliſhed in each city, replied the oracle[44]. Even prieſts, in thoſe ages, could, it ſeems, allow ſalvation to thoſe of a different communion. The Romans commonly adopted the gods of the conquered people; and never diſputed the attributes of thoſe local and national deities, in whoſe territories they reſided. The religious wars and perſecutions of the Egyptian idolaters are indeed an exception to this rule; but are accounted for by ancient authors from reaſons ſingular and remarkable. Different ſpecies of animals were the deities of the different ſects among the Egyptians; and the deities being in continual war, engaged their votaries in the ſame contention. The worſhipper of dogs could not long remain in peace with the adorers of cats or wolves[45]. But where that reaſon took not place, the Egyptian ſuperſtition was not ſo incompatible as is commonly imagined; ſince we learn from Herodotus[46], that very large contributions were given by Amaſis towards rebuilding the temple of Delphi.

The intolerance of almoſt all religions, which have maintained the unity of God, is as remarkable as the contrary principle of polytheiſts. The implacable narrow ſpirit of the Jews is well known. Mahometaniſm ſet out with ſtill mory bloody principles;

[44] Xenoph. Memor. lib. ii. [45] Plutarch. de Iſid. & Oſiride.
[46] Lib. ii. ſub. fine.

and even to this day, deals out damnation, though not fire and faggot, to all other ſects. And if, among Chriſtians, the Engliſh and Dutch have embraced the principles of toleration, this ſingularity has proceeded from the ſteady reſolution of the civil magiſtrate, in oppoſition to the continued efforts of prieſts and bigots.

The diſciples of Zoroaſter ſhut the doors of heaven againſt all but the Magians[47]. Nothing could more obſtruct the progreſs of the Perſian conqueſts, than the furious zeal of that nation againſt the temples and images of the Greeks. And after the overthrow of that empire we find Alexander, as a polytheiſt, immediately re-eſtabliſhing the worſhip of the Babylonians, which their former princes, as monotheiſts, had carefully aboliſhed[48]. Even the blind and devoted attachment of that conqueror to the Greek ſuperſtition hindered not, but he himſelf ſacrificed according to the Babyloniſh rites and ceremonies[49].

So ſociable is polytheiſm, that the utmoſt fierceneſs and antipathy, which it meets with in an oppoſite religion, is ſcarcely able to diſguſt it, and keep it at a diſtance. Auguſtus praiſed extremely the reſerve of his grandſon, Caius Cæſar, when this latter prince, paſſing by Jeruſalem, deigned not to ſacrifice according to the Jewiſh law. But for what reaſon did Auguſtus ſo much approve of this conduct?

[47] Hyde, de Relig. vet. Perſarum.
[48] Arrian. de exped. lib. iii. Idem. lib. vii.
[49] Id. ibid.

Only becauſe that religion was by the Pagans eſteemed ignoble and barbarous[50].

I may venture to affirm, that few corruptions of idolatry and polytheiſm are more pernicious to ſociety than this corruption of theiſm[51]. when carried to the utmoſt height. The human ſacrifices of the Carthaginians, Mexicans, and many barbarous nations[52], ſcarcely exceed the inquiſition and perſecution of Rome and Madrid. For beſides, that the effuſion of blood may not be ſo great in the former caſe as in the latter; beſides this, I ſay, the human victims, being choſen by lot, or by ſome exterior ſigns, affect not, in ſo conſiderable a degree, the reſt of the ſociety. Whereas virtue, knowledge, love of liberty, are the qualities which call down the fatal vengeance of inquiſitors; and when expelled, leave the ſociety in the moſt ſhameful ignorance, corruption, and bondage. The illegal murder of one man by a tyrant is more pernicious than the death of a thouſand by peſtilence, famine, or any undiſtinguiſhing calamity.

In the temple of Diana at Aricia near Rome, whoever murdered the preſent prieſt, was legally entitled to be inſtalled his ſucceſſor[53]. A very ſingular inſtitution! For, however barbarous and bloody the common ſuperſtitions often are to the laity, they uſually turn to the advantage of the holy order.

[50] Sueton. in vita Aug. c. 93.
[51] *Corruptio optimi peſſima.*
[52] See NOTE [D].
[53] Strabo, lib. v. Sueton. in vita. Cal.

Sect. X. *With regard to Courage or Abaſement.*

From the compariſon of theiſm and idolatry, we may form ſome other obſervations, which will alſo confirm the vulgar obſervation, that the corruption of the beſt things gives riſe to the worſt.

Where the deity is repreſented as infinitely ſuperior to mankind, this belief, though altogether juſt, is apt, when joined with ſuperſtitious terrors, to ſink the human mind into the loweſt ſubmiſſion and abaſement, and to repreſent the monkiſh virtues of mortification, penance, humility, and paſſive ſuffering, as the only qualities which are acceptable to him. But where the gods are conceived to be only a little ſuperior to mankind, and to have been, many of them, advanced from that inferior rank, we are more at our eaſe in our addreſſes to them, and may even, without profaneneſs, aſpire ſometimes to a rivalſhip and emulation of them. Hence activity, ſpirit, courage, magnanimity, love of liberty, and all the virtues which aggrandize a people.

The heroes in paganiſm correſpond exactly to the ſaints in popery and holy devices in Mahometaniſm. The place of Hercules, Theſeus, Hector, Romulus, is now ſupplied by Dominic, Francis, Anthony, and Benedict. Inſtead of the deſtruction of monſters, the ſubduing of tyrants, the defence of our native country; whippings and faſtings, cowardice and humility, abject ſubmiſſion, and ſlaviſh obedience, are become the means of obtaining celeſtial honors among mankind.

One great incitement to the pious Alexander in

his warlike expeditions was his rivalſhip of Hercules and Bacchus, whom he juſtly pretended to have excelled[54]. Braſidas, that generous and noble Spartan, after falling in battle, had heroic honors paid him by the inhabitants of Amphipolis, whoſe defence he had embraced[55]. And in general, all founders of ſtates and colonies among the Greeks were raiſed to this inferior rank of divinity, by thoſe who reaped the benefit of their labors.

This gave riſe to the obſervation of Machiavel[56], that the doctrines of the Chriſtian religion, meaning the catholic (for he knew no other), which recommend only paſſive courage and ſuffering, had ſubdued the ſpirit of mankind, and had fitted them for ſlavery and ſubjection. An obſervation which would certainly be juſt, were there not many other circumſtances in human ſociety which control the genius and character of a religion.

Braſidas ſeized a mouſe, and being bit by it, let it go. *There is nothing ſo contemptible*, ſaid he, *but what may be ſafe, if it has but courage to defend itſelf*[57]. Bellarmine patiently and humbly allowed the fleas and other odious vermin to prey upon him. *We ſhall have heaven*, ſaid he, *to reward us for our ſufferings: But theſe poor creatures have nothing but the enjoyment of the preſent life*[58]. Such difference is there between the maxims of a Greek hero and a Catholic ſaint.

[54] Arrian paſſim.
[55] Thucyd. lib. v.
[56] Diſcorſi, lib. vi.
[57] Plut. Apopth.
[58] Bayle, Article Bellarmine.

Sect. XI. *With regard to Reaſon or Abſurdity.*

Here is another obſervation to the ſame purpoſe, and a new proof that the corruption of the beſt things begets the worſt. If we examine, without prejudice, the ancient heathen mythology, as contained in the poets, we ſhall not diſcover in it any ſuch monſtrous abſurdity as we may at firſt be apt to apprehend. Where is the difficulty in conceiving, that the ſame powers or principles, whatever they were, which formed this viſible world, men and animals, produced alſo a ſpecies of intelligent creatures, of more refined ſubſtance and greater authority than the reſt? That theſe creatures may be capricious, revengeful, paſſionate, voluptuous, is eaſily conceived; nor is any circumſtance more apt, among ourſelves, to engender ſuch vices, than the licence of abſolute authority. And in ſhort, the whole mythological ſyſtem is ſo natural, that, in the vaſt variety of planets and worlds, contained in this univerſe, it ſeems more than probable, that, ſomewhere or other, it is really carried into execution.

The chief objection to it with regard to this planet, is, that it is not aſcertained by any juſt reaſon or authority. The ancient tradition, inſiſted on by heathen prieſts and theologers, is but a weak foundation; and tranſmitted alſo ſuch a number of contradictory reports, ſupported, all of them, by equal authority, that it became abſolutely impoſſible to fix a preference amongſt them. A few volumes, therefore, muſt contain all the polemical writings of pagan prieſts:

prieſts: And their whole theology muſt conſiſt more of traditional ſtories and ſuperſtitious practices, than of philoſophical argument and controverſy.

But where theiſm forms the fundamental principle of any popular religion, that tenet is ſo conformable to ſound reaſon, that philoſophy is apt to incorporate itſelf with ſuch a ſyſtem of theology. And if the other dogmas of that ſyſtem be contained in a ſacred book, ſuch as the Alcoran, or be determined by any viſible authority, like that of the Roman pontiff, ſpeculative reaſoners naturally carry on their aſſent, and embrace a theory, which has been inſtilled into them by their earlieſt education, and which alſo poſſeſſes ſome degree of conſiſtence and uniformity. But as theſe appearances are ſure, all of them, to prove deceitful, philoſophy will ſoon find herſelf very unequally yoked with her new aſſociate; and inſtead of regulating each principle as they advance together, ſhe is at every turn perverted to ſerve the purpoſes of ſuperſtition For beſides the unavoidable incoherencies, which muſt be reconciled and adjuſted, one may ſafely affirm, that all popular theology, eſpecially the ſcholaſtic, has a kind of appetite for abſurdity and contradiction. If that theology went not beyond reaſon and common ſenſe, her doctrines would appear too eaſy and familiar. Amazement muſt of neceſſity be raiſed: Myſtery affected: Darkneſs and obſcurity ſought after: And a foundation of merit afforded to the devout votaries, who deſire an opportunity of ſubduing their rebellious reaſon, by the belief of the moſt unintelligible ſophiſms.

Eccleſiaſtical hiſtory ſufficiently confirms theſe reflections. When a controverſy is ſtarted, ſome people always pretend with certainty to foretel the iſſue. Which-ever opinion, ſay they, is moſt contrary to plain ſenſe, is ſure to prevail; even where the general intereſt of the ſyſtem requires not that deciſion. Though the reproach of hereſy may, for ſome time, be bandied about among the diſputants, it always reſts at laſt on the ſide of reaſon. Any one, it is pretended, that has but learning enough of this kind to know the definition of Arian, Pelagian, Eraſtian, Socinian, Sabellian, Eutychian, Neſtorian, Monothelite, &c. not to mention Proteſtant, whoſe fate is yet uncertain, will be convinced of the truth of this obſervation. It is thus a ſyſtem becomes more abſurd in the end, merely from its being reaſonable and philoſophical in the beginning.

To oppoſe the torrent of ſcholaſtic religion by ſuch feeble maxims as theſe, that *it is impoſſible for the ſame thing to be and not to be*, that the *whole is greater than a part*, that *two and three make five;* is pretending to ſtop the ocean with a bull-ruſh. Will you ſet up profane reaſon againſt ſacred myſtery? No puniſhment is great enough for your impiety. And the ſame fires which were kindled for heretics, will ſerve alſo for the deſtruction of philoſophers.

Sect. XII. *With regard to Doubt or Conviction.*

We meet every day with people ſo ſceptical with regard to hiſtory, that they aſſert it impoſſible for any nation ever to believe ſuch abſurd principles as thoſe of Greek and Egyptian paganiſm; and at the ſame time ſo dogmatical with regard to religion, that they think the ſame abſurdities are to be found in no other communion. Cambyſes entertained like prejudices; and very impiouſly ridiculed, and even wounded, Apis, the great god of the Egyptians, who appeared to his profane ſenſes nothing but a large ſpotted bull. But Herodotus judiciouſly aſcribes this ſally of paſſion to a real madneſs or diſorder of the brain: Otherwiſe, ſays the hiſtorian, he never would have openly affronted any eſtabliſhed worſhip. For on that head, continues he, every nation are beſt ſatisfied with their own, and think they have the advantage over every other nation.

It muſt be allowed, that the Roman Catholics are a very learned ſect; and that no one communion, but that of the church of England, can diſpute their being the moſt learned of all the Chriſtian churches: Yet Averoes, the famous Arabian, who, no doubt, had heard of the Egyptian ſuperſtitions, declares, that, of all religions, the moſt abſurd and nonſenſical is that, whoſe votaries eat, after having created, their deity.

I believe, indeed, that there is no tenet in all paganiſm, which would give ſo fair a ſcope to ridicule as this of the *real preſence:* For it is ſo abſurd, that

it eludes the force of all argument. There are even ſome pleaſant ſtories of that kind, which, though ſomewhat profane, are commonly told by the Catholics themſelves. One day a prieſt, it is ſaid, gave inadvertently, inſtead of the ſacrament, a counter, which had by accident fallen among the holy wafers. The communicant waited patiently for ſome time, expecting it would diſſolve on his tongue: But finding that it ſtill remained entire, he took it off. *I wiſh*, cried he to the prieſt, *you have not committed ſome miſtake: I wiſh you have not given me God the Father: He is ſo hard and tough there is no ſwallowing him.*

A famous general, at that time in the Muſcovite ſervice having come to Paris for the recovery of his wounds, brought along with him a young Turk, whom he had taken priſoner. Some of the doctors of the Sorbonne (who are altogether as poſitive as the derviſes of Conſtantinople) thinking it a pity that the poor Turk ſhould be damned for want of inſtruction, ſolicited Muſtapha very hard to turn Chriſtian, and promiſed him, for his encouragement, plenty of good wine in this world, and paradiſe in the next. Theſe allurements were too powerful to he reſiſted; and therefore, having been well inſtructed and catechized, he at laſt agreed to receive the ſacraments of baptiſm and the Lord's ſupper. The prieſt, however, to make every thing ſure and ſolid, ſtill continued his inſtructions; and began the next day with the uſual queſtion. *How many Gods are there? None at all*, replies Benedict; for that was his new name. *How! None at all!* cries the prieſt.

To be ſure, ſaid the honeſt proſelyte. *You have told me all along that there is but one God: And yeſterday I eat him.*

Such are the doctrines of our brethren the Catholics. But to theſe doctrines we are ſo accuſtomed, that we never wonder at them: Though in a future age, it will probably become difficult to perſuade ſome nations, that any human, two-legged creature could ever embrace ſuch principles. And it is a thouſand to one, but theſe nations themſelves ſhall have ſomething full as abſurd in their own creed, to which they will give a moſt implicit and moſt religious aſſent.

I lodged once at Paris in the ſame hotel with an ambaſſador from Tunis, who, having paſſed ſome years at London, was returning home that way. One day I obſerved his Mooriſh excellency diverting himſelf under the porch, with ſurveying the ſplendid equipages that drove along; when there chanced to paſs that way ſome *Capucin* friars, who had never ſeen a Turk; as he, on his part, though accuſtomed to the European dreſſes, had never ſeen the groteſque figure of a *Capucin*: And there is no expreſſing the mutual admiration with which they inſpired each other. Had the chaplain of the embaſſy entered into a diſpute with theſe Franciſcans, their reciprocal ſurpriſe had been of the ſame nature. Thus all mankind ſtand ſtaring at one another; and there is no beating it into their heads, that the turban of the African is not juſt as good or as bad a faſhion as the cowl of the European. *He is a very honeſt man*, ſaid the prince of Sallee, ſpeaking of de Ruyter, *It is a pity he were a Chriſtian.*

How can you worſhip leeks and onions? we ſhall ſuppoſe a Sorbonniſt to ſay to a prieſt of Sais. If we worſhip them, replies the latter; at leaſt, we do not, at the ſame time, eat them. But what ſtrange objects of adoration are cats and monkies? ſays the learned doctor. They are at leaſt as good as the relics or rotten bones of martyrs, anſwers his no leſs learned antagoniſt. Are you not mad, inſiſts the Catholic, to cut one another's throat about the preference of a cabbage or a cucumber? Yes, ſays the pagan; I allow it, if you will confeſs, that thoſe are ſtill madder, who fight about the preference among volumes of ſophiſtry, ten thouſand of which are not equal in value to one cabbage or cucumber[*].

Every by-ſtander will eaſily judge (but unfortunately the by-ſtanders are few), that, if nothing were requiſite to eſtabliſh any popular ſyſtem, but expoſing the abſurdities of other ſyſtems, every votary of every ſuperſtition could give a ſufficient reaſon for his blind and bigoted attachment to the principles in which he has been educated. But without ſo extenſive a knowledge, on which to ground this aſſurance (and perhaps, better without it), there is not wanting a ſufficient ſtock of religious zeal and faith among mankind. Diodorus Siculus[**] gives a remarkable inſtance to this purpoſe, of which he was himſelf an eye-witneſs. While Egypt lay under the greateſt terror of the Roman name, a legionary ſoldier having inadvertently been guilty of the ſacrilegious impiety of killing a cat, the whole people roſe

[*] See NOTE [E].
[**] Lib. i.

upon him with the utmoſt fury; and all the efforts of the prince were not able to ſave him. The ſenate and people of Rome, I am perſuaded, would not, then, have been ſo delicate with regard to their national deities. They very frankly, a little after that time, voted Auguſtus a place in the celeſtial manſions; and would have dethroned every god in heaven for his ſake, had he ſeemed to deſire it. *Preſens divus habitur* Auguſtus, ſays Horace. That is a very important point: And in other nations and other ages, the ſame circumſtance has not been deemed altogether indifferent [61].

Notwithſtanding the ſanctity of our holy religion, ſays Tully [62], no crime is more common with us than ſacrilege: But was it ever heard of, that an Egyptian violated the temple of a cat, an ibis, or a crocodile? There is no torture an Egyptian would not undergo, ſays the ſame author in another place [63], rather than injure an ibis, an aſpic, a cat, a dog, or a crocodile. Thus it is ſtrictly true what Dryden obſerves,

> "Of whatſoe'er deſcent their godhead be,
> "Stock, ſtone, or other homely pedigree,
> "In his defence his ſervants are as bold,
> "As if he had been born of beaten gold."
>
> Abſalom and Achitophel.

[61] When Louis the XIVth took on himſelf the protection of the Jeſuits' College of Clermont, the ſociety ordered the king's arms to be put up over the gate, and took down the croſs, in order to make way for it: Which gave occaſion to the following epigram:

> Suſtulit hinc Chriſti, poſuitque inſignia Regis:
> Impia gens, alium neſcit habere Deum.

[62] De nat. Deor. l. i. [63] Tuſc. Quæſt. lib. v.

Nay, the baſer the materials are of which the divinity is compoſed, the greater devotion is he likely to excite in the breaſts of his deluded votaries. They exult in their ſhame, and make a merit with their deity in braving for his ſake all the ridicule and contumely of his enemies. Ten thouſand Cruſaders inliſt themſelves under the holy banners; and even openly triumph in thoſe parts of their religion which their adverſaries regard as the moſt reproachful.

There occurs, I own, a difficulty in the Egyptian ſyſtem of theology; as indeed, few ſyſtems of that kind are entirely free from difficulties. It is evident, from their method of propagation, that a couple of cats, in fifty years, would ſtock a whole kingdom; and if that religious veneration were ſtill paid them, it would, in twenty more, not only be eaſier in Egypt to find a god than a man, which Petronius ſays was the caſe in ſome parts of Italy; but the gods muſt at laſt entirely ſtarve the men, and leave themſelves neither prieſts nor votaries remaining. It is probable, therefore, that this wiſe nation, the moſt celebrated in antiquity for prudence and ſound policy, foreſeeing ſuch dangerous conſequences, reſerved all their worſhip for the full-grown divinities, and uſed the freedom to drown the holy ſpawn or little ſucking gods, without any ſcruple or remorſe. And thus the practice of warping the tenets of religion, in order to ſerve temporal intereſts, is not, by any means, to be regarded as an invention of theſe later ages.

The learned, philoſophical Varro, diſcourſing of religion, pretends not to deliver any thing beyond

probabilities and appearances: Such was his good ſenſe and moderation! But the paſſionate, the zealous Auguſtin, inſults the noble Roman on his ſcepticiſm and reſerve, and profeſſes the moſt thorough belief and aſſurance [a]. A heathen poet, however, contemporary with the ſaint, abſurdly eſteems the religious ſyſtem of the latter ſo falſe, that even the credulity of children, he ſays, could not engage them to believe it [b].

Is it ſtrange, when miſtakes are ſo common, to find every one poſitive and dogmatical? And that the zeal often riſes in proportion to the error? *Moverunt*, ſays Spartian, *& ea tempeſtate, Judæi bellum quod vetabantur mutilare genitalia* [c].

If ever there was a nation or a time in which the public religion loſt all authority over mankind, we might expect that infidelity in Rome, during the Ciceronian age, would openly have erected its throne, and that Cicero himſelf, in every ſpeech and action, would have been its moſt declared abettor. But it appears, that, whatever ſceptical liberties that great man might take, in his writings or in philoſophical converſation; he yet avoided, in the common conduct of life, the imputation of deiſm and profaneneſs. Even in his own family, and to his wife Terentia, whom he highly truſted, he was willing to appear a devout religioniſt; and there remains a letter, addreſſed to her, in which

[a] De civitate Dei, l. iii. c. 17.
[b] Claudii Rutilii Numitiani iter, lib. i. l. 386.
[c] In vita Adriani.

he ſeriouſly deſires her to offer ſacrifice to Apollo and Æſculapius, in gratitude for the recovery of his health [67].

Pompey's devotion was much more ſincere: In all his conduct, during the civil wars, he paid a great regard to auguries, dreams, and propheſies [68]. Auguſtus was tainted with ſuperſtition of every kind. As it is reported of Milton, that his poetical genius never flowed with eaſe and abundance in the ſpring; ſo Auguſtus obſerved, that his own genius for dreaming never was ſo perfect during that ſeaſon, nor was ſo much to be relied on, as during the reſt of the year. That great and able emperor was alſo extremely uneaſy, when he happened to change his ſhoes, and put the right-foot ſhoe on the left foot [69]. In ſhort, it cannot be doubted, but the votaries of the eſtabliſhed ſuperſtition of antiquity were as numerous in every ſtate, as thoſe of the modern religion are at preſent. Its influence was as univerſal, though it was not ſo great. As many people gave their aſſent to it; though that aſſent was not ſeemingly ſo ſtrong, preciſe, and affirmative.

We may obſerve that, notwithſtanding the dogmatical, imperious ſtyle of all ſuperſtition, the conviction of the religioniſts, in all ages, is more affected than real, and ſcarcely ever approaches, in any degree, to that ſolid belief and perſuaſion, which governs us in the common affairs of life. Men dare not avow, even to their own hearts, the doubts

[67] Lib. xiv. epiſt. 7. [68] Cicero de Divin. lib. ii. c. 24.
[69] Sueton. Aug. cap. 90, 91, 92. Plin. lib. ii. cap. 7.

which they entertain on ſuch ſubjects: They make a merit of implicit faith; and diſguiſe to themſelves their real infidelity, by the ſtrongeſt aſſeverations and moſt poſitive bigotry. But nature is too hard for all their endeavours, and ſuffers not the obſcure, glimmering light, afforded in thoſe ſhadowy regions, to equal the ſtrong impreſſions made by common ſenſe and by experience. The uſual courſe of men's conduct belies their words, and ſhows, that their aſſent in theſe matters is ſome unaccountable operation of the mind between diſbelief and conviction, but approaching much nearer to the former than to the latter.

Since, therefore, the mind of man appears of ſo looſe and unſteady a texture, that even at preſent, when ſo many perſons find an intereſt in continually employing on it the chiſſel and the hammer, yet are they not able to engrave theological tenets with any laſting impreſſion; how much more muſt this have been the caſe in ancient times, when the retainers to the holy function were ſo much fewer in compariſon? No wonder that the appearances were then very inconſiſtent, and that men, on ſome occaſions, might ſeem determined infidels, and enemies to the eſtabliſhed religion, without being ſo in reality; or, at leaſt, without knowing their own mind in that particular.

Another cauſe which rendered the ancient religions more looſe than the modern, is, that the former were *traditional* and the latter are *ſcriptural;* and the tradition in the former was complex, contradictory, and, on many occaſions, doubtful; ſo that it

could not poſſibly be reduced to any ſtandard and canon, or afford any determinate articles of faith. The ſtories of the gods were numberleſs like the popiſh legends; and though every one, almoſt, believed a part of theſe ſtories, yet no one could believe or know the whole; while, at the ſame time, all muſt have acknowledged, that no one part ſtood on a better foundation than the reſt. The traditions of different cities and nations were alſo, on many occaſions, directly oppoſite; and no reaſon could be aſſigned for preferring one to the other. And as there was an infinite number of ſtories, with regard to which tradition was nowiſe poſitive, the gradation was inſenſible, from the moſt fundamental articles of faith to thoſe looſe and precarious fictions. The pagan religion, therefore, ſeemed to vaniſh like a cloud, whenever one approached to it, and examined it piecemeal. It could never be aſcertained by any fixed dogmas and principles. And though this did not convert the generality of mankind from ſo abſurd a faith; for when will the people be reaſonable? yet it made them faulter and heſitate more in maintaining their principles, and was even apt to produce in certain diſpoſitions of mind, ſome practices and opinions, which had the appearance of determined infidelity.

To which we may add, that the fables of the pagan religion were, of themſelves, light, eaſy, and familiar; without devils, or ſeas of brimſtone, or any object that could much terrify the imagination. Who could forbear ſmiling, when he thought of the loves of Mars and Venus, or the amorous frolics of

Jupiter and Pan? In this reſpect, it was a true poetical religion, if it had not rather too much levity for the graver kinds of poetry. We find that it has been adopted by modern bards; nor have theſe talked with greater freedom and irreverence of the gods, whom they regarded as fictions, than the ancients did of the real objects of their devotion.

The inference is by no means juſt, that, becauſe a ſyſtem of religion has made no deep impreſſion on the minds of a people, it muſt therefore have been poſitively rejected by all men of common ſenſe; and that oppoſite principles, in ſpite of the prejudices of education, were generally eſtabliſhed by argument and reaſoning. I know not but a contrary inference may be more probable. The leſs importunate and aſſuming any ſpecies of ſuperſtition appears, the leſs will it provoke men's ſpleen and indignation, or engage them into inquiries concerning its foundation and origin. This in the mean time is obvious, that the empire of all religious faith over the underſtanding is wavering and uncertain, ſubject to every variety of humor, and dependent on the preſent incidents which ſtrike the imagination. The difference is only in the degrees. An ancient will place a ſtroke of impiety and one of ſuperſtition alternately, throughout a whole diſcourſe [70]: A modern often

[70] Witneſs this remarkable paſſage of Tacitus: "Præter "multiplices rerum humanarum caſus, cœlo terraque pro- "digia, et fulminum monitus, et futurorum præſagia, læta, "triſtia, ambigua, manifeſta. Nec enim unquam atrocio- "ribus populi Romani cladibus, magiſque juſtis indiciis ap- "probatum eſt, non eſſe curæ Diis ſecuritatem noſtram, eſſe

thinks in the ſame way, though he may be more guarded in his expreſſion.

Lucian tells us expreſsly [71], that whoever believed not the moſt ridiculous fables of paganiſm, was deemed by the people profane and impious. To what purpoſe, indeed, would that agreeable author have employed the whole force of his wit and ſatire againſt the national religion, had not that religion been generally believed by his countrymen and contemporaries?

Livy [72] acknowledges as frankly as any divine would at preſent, the common incredulity of his age; but then he condemns it as ſeverely. And who can imagine, that a national ſuperſtition, which could delude ſo ingenious a man, would not alſo impoſe on the generality of the people?

The Stoics beſtowed many magnificent and even impious epithets on their ſage; that he alone was rich, free, a king, and equal to the immortal gods. They forgot to add, that he was not ſuperior in prudence and underſtanding to an old woman. For ſurely nothing can be more pitiful than the ſentiments which that ſect entertained with regard to religious matters; while they ſeriouſly agree with the

"ultionem." Hiſt. lib. i. Auguſtus's quarrel with Neptune is an inſtance of the ſame kind. Had not the emperor believed Neptune to be a real being, and to have dominion over the ſea, where had been the foundation of his anger? And if he believed it, what madneſs to provoke ſtill farther that deity? The ſame obſervations may be made upon Quintilian's exclamation on account of the death of his children, lib. vi. Præf.

[71] Philoſeudes. [72] Lib. x. cap. 40.

common augurs, that, when a raven croaks from the left, it is a good omen; but a bad one when a rook makes a noiſe from the ſame quarter. Panætius was the only Stoic among the Greeks, who ſo much as doubted with regard to auguries and divinations [73]. Marcus Antoninus [74] tells us, that he himſelf had received many admonitions from the gods in his ſleep. It is true, Epictetus [75] forbids us to regard the language of rooks and ravens; but it is not that they do not ſpeak truth: it is only becauſe they can foretel nothing but the breaking of our neck or the forfeiture of our eſtate; which are circumſtances, ſays he, that nowiſe concern us. Thus the Stoics join a philoſophical enthuſiaſm to a religious ſuperſtition. The force of their mind, being all turned to the ſide of morals, unbent itſelf in that of religion [76].

Plato [77] introduces Socrates affirming, that the accuſation of impiety raiſed againſt him was owing entirely to his rejecting ſuch fables as thoſe of Saturn's caſtrating his father Uranus, and Jupiter's dethroning Saturn: yet in a ſubſequent dialogue [78], Socrates confeſſes, that the doctrine of the mortality of the ſoul was the received opinion of the people. Is there here any contradiction? Yes, ſurely: but the contradiction is not in Plato; it is in the people, whoſe

[73] Cicero de Divin. lib. i. cap. 3 et 7.
[74] Lib. i. § 17. [75] Ench. § 17.
[76] The Stoics, I own, were not quite orthodox in the eſtabliſhed religion; but one may ſee, from theſe inſtances, that they went a great way: and the people undoubtedly went every length.
[77] Eutyphro. [78] Phædo.

religious principles in general are always compoſed of the moſt diſcordant parts; eſpecially in an age when ſuperſtition ſate ſo eaſy and light upon them [79].

The ſame Cicero, who affected, in his own family, to appear a devout religioniſt, makes no ſcruple, in a public court of judicature, of treating the doctrine of a future ſtate as a ridiculous fable, to which no body could give any attention [80]. Salluſt [81] repreſents Cæſar as ſpeaking the ſame language in the open ſenate [82].

But that all theſe freedoms implied not a total and univerſal infidelity and ſcepticiſm amongſt the people, is too apparent to be denied. Though ſome parts of the national religion hung looſe upon the minds of men, other parts adhered more cloſely to them: and it was the chief buſineſs of the ſceptical philoſophers to ſhow, that there was no more foundation for one than for the other. This is the artifice of Cotta in the dialogues concerning the *nature*

[79] See NOTE [F].

[80] Pro Cluentio, cap. 61.

[81] De bello Catilin.

[82] Cicero (Tuſc. Quæſt.) lib. i. cap. 5, 6. and Seneca (Ep. 24.) as alſo Juvenal (Satyr 2.) maintain, that there is no boy or old woman ſo ridiculous as to believe the poets in their accounts of a future ſtate. Why then does Lucretius ſo highly exalt his maſter for freeing us from theſe terrors? Perhaps the generality of mankind were then in the diſpoſition of Cephalus in Plato (de Rep. lib. i.), who while he was young and healthful could ridicule theſe ſtories; but as ſoon as he became old and infirm, began to entertain apprehenſions of their truth. This we may obſerve not to be unuſual even at preſent.

of

of the gods. He refutes the whole ſyſtem of mythology, by leading the orthodox, gradually, from the more momentous ſtories which were believed, to the more frivolous which every one ridiculed: from the gods to the goddeſſes; from the goddeſſes to the nymphs; from the nymphs to the fauns and ſatyrs. His maſter, Carneades, had employed the ſame method of reaſoning [82].

Upon the whole, the greateſt and moſt obſervable differences between a *traditional, mythological* religion, and a *ſyſtematical, ſcholaſtic* one, are two: The former is often more reaſonable, as conſiſting only of a multitude of ſtories; which, however groundleſs, imply no expreſs abſurdity and demonſtrative contradiction; and ſits alſo ſo eaſy and light on men's mind, that though it may be as univerſally received, it happily makes no ſuch deep impreſſion on the affections and underſtanding.

[82] Sext. Empir. adverſ. Mathem. lib. viii.

Sect. XIII. *Impious conceptions of the divine nature in popular religions of both kinds.*

The primary religion of mankind ariſes chiefly from an anxious fear of future events; and what ideas will naturally be entertained of inviſible, unknown powers, while men lie under diſmal apprehenſions of any kind, may eaſily be conceived. Every image of vengeance, ſeverity, cruelty, and malice, muſt occur, and muſt augment the ghaſtlineſs and horror which oppreſſes the amazed religioniſt. A panic having once ſeized the mind, the active fancy ſtill farther multiplies the objects of terror; while that profound darkneſs, or, what is worſe, that glimmering light with which we are environed, repreſents the ſpectres of divinity under the moſt dreadful appearances imaginable. And no idea of perverſe wickedneſs can be framed, which thoſe terrified devotees do not readily, without ſcruple, apply to their deity.

This appears the natural ſtate of religion, when ſurveyed in one light. But if we conſider, on the other hand, that ſpirit of praiſe and eulogy which neceſſarily has place in all religions, and which is the conſequence of theſe very terrors, we muſt expect a quite contrary ſyſtem of theology to prevail. Every virtue, every excellence, muſt be aſcribed to the divinity, and no exaggeration will be deemed ſufficient to reach thoſe perfections with which he is endowed. Whatever ſtrains of panegyric can be invented, are immediately embraced, without conſulting

any arguments or phenomena: It is eſteemed a ſufficient confirmation of them, that they give us more magnificent ideas of the divine objects of our worſhip and adoration.

Here therefore is a kind of contradiction between the different principles of human nature which enter into religion. Our natural terrors preſent the notion of a deviliſh and malicious deity: our propenſity to adulation leads us to acknowledge an excellent and divine. And the influence of theſe oppoſite principles are various, according to the different ſituation of the human underſtanding.

In very barbarous and ignorant nations, ſuch as the Africans and Indians, nay even the Japoneſe, who can form no extenſive ideas of power and knowledge, worſhip may be paid to a being, whom they confeſs to be wicked and deteſtable; though they may be cautious, perhaps, of pronouncing this judgement of him in public, or in his temple, where he may be ſuppoſed to hear their reproaches.

Such rude, imperfect ideas of the divinity, adhere long to all idolaters; and it may ſafely be affirmed, that the Greeks themſelves never got entirely rid of them. It is remarked by Xenophon [81], in praiſe of Socrates, that this philoſopher aſſented not to the vulgar opinion which ſuppoſed the gods to know ſome things, and be ignorant of others: He maintained, that they knew every thing; what was done, ſaid, or even thought. But as this was a ſtrain of

[81] Mem. lib. i.

philoſophy [84] much above the conception of his countrymen, we need not be ſurpriſed, if very frankly, in their books and converſation, they blamed the deities, whom they worſhipped in their temples. It is obſervable, that Herodotus, in particular, ſcruples not, in many paſſages, to aſcribe *envy* to the gods; a ſentiment, of all others, the moſt ſuitable to a mean and deviliſh nature. The pagan hymns, however, ſung in public worſhip, contained nothing but epithets of praiſe; even while the actions aſcribed to the gods were the moſt barbarous and deteſtable. When Timotheus the poet recited a hymn to Diana, in which he enumerated, with the greateſt eulogies, all the actions and attributes of that cruel, capricious goddeſs: *May your daughter*, ſaid one preſent, *become ſuch as the deity whom you celebrate* [85].

But as men farther exalt their idea of their divinity, it is their notion of his power and knowledge only, not of his goodneſs, which is improved. On the contrary, in proportion to the ſuppoſed extend of his ſcience and authority, their terrors naturally augment; while they believe, that no ſecrecy can conceal them from his ſcrutiny, and that even the inmoſt receſſes of their breaſt lie open before him. They muſt then be careful not to form expreſsly any ſentiment of blame and diſapprobation. All muſt be applauſe, raviſhment, ecſtaſy. And while their

[84] It was conſidered among the ancients as a very extraordinary, philoſophical paradox, that the preſence of the gods was not confined to the heavens, but were extended every where; as we learn from Lucian. *Hirmetimus ſive de ſectis.*

[85] Plutarch. de Superſtit.

gloomy apprehenſions make them aſcribe to him meaſures of conduct, which, in human creatures, would be highly blamed, they muſt ſtill affect to praiſe and admire that conduct in the object of their devotional addreſſes. Thus it may ſafely be affirmed, that popular religions are really, in the conception of their more vulgar votaries, a ſpecies of demoniſm; and the higher the deity is exalted in power and knowledge, the lower of courſe is he depreſſed in goodneſs and benevolence; whatever epithets of praiſe may be beſtowed on him by his amazed adorers. Among idolaters, the words may be falſe, and belie the ſecret opinion: but among more exalted religioniſts, the opinion itſelf contracts a kind of falſhood, and belies the inward ſentiment. The heart ſecretly deteſts ſuch meaſures of cruel and implacable vengeance; but the judgment dares not but pronounce them perfect and adorable: And the additional miſery of this inward ſtruggle aggravates all the other terrors, by which theſe unhappy victims to ſuperſtition are for ever haunted.

Lucian [66] obſerves that a young man, who reads the hiſtory of the gods in Homer or Heſiod, and finds their factions, wars, injuſtice, inceſt, adultery, and other immoralities ſo highly celebrated, is much ſurpriſed afterwards, when he comes into the world, to obſerve that puniſhments are by law inflicted on the ſame actions, which he had been taught to aſcribe to ſuperior beings. The contradiction is ſtill perhaps ſtronger between the repreſentations

[66] Necyomantia.

given us by ſome later religions and our natural ideas of generoſity, lenity, impartiality, and juſtice; and in proportion to the multiplied terrors of theſe religions, the barbarous conceptions of the divinity are multiplied upon us [87]. Nothing can preſerve untainted the genuine principles of morals in our judgment of human conduct, but the abſolute neceſſity of theſe principles to the exiſtence of ſociety. If common conception can indulge princes in a ſyſtem of ethics, ſomewhat different from that which ſhould regulate private perſons; how much more thoſe ſuperior beings, whoſe attributes, views, and nature, are ſo totally unknown to us? *Sunt ſuperis ſua jura* [88]. The gods have maxims of juſtice peculiar to themſelves.

Sect. XIV. *Bad influence of popular religions on morality.*

Here I cannot forbear obſerving a fact, which may be worth the attention of ſuch as make human nature the object of their inquiry. It is certain that, in every religion, however ſublime the verbal definition which it gives of its divinity, many of the votaries, perhaps the greateſt number, will ſtill ſeek the divine favor, not by virtue and good morals, which alone can be acceptable to a perfect being, but either by frivolous obſervances, by intemperate zeal, by rapturous ecſtaſies, or by the belief of

[87] See NOTE [G].

[88] Ovid. Metam. lib. ix. 501.

myſterious and abſurd opinions, The leaſt part of the *Sadder*, as well as of the *Pentateuch*, conſiſts in precepts of morality; and we may alſo be aſſured, that that part was always the leaſt obſerved and regarded. When the old Romans were attacked with a peſtilence, they never aſcribed their ſufferings to their vices, or dreamed of repentance and amendment. They never thought, that they were the general robbers of the world, whoſe ambition and avarice made deſolate the earth, and reduced opulent nations to want and beggary. They only created a dictator [99], in order to drive a nail into a door; and by that means, they thought that they had ſufficiently appeaſed their incenſed deity.

In Ægina, one faction forming a conſpiracy, barbarouſly and treacherouſly aſſaſſinated ſeven hundred of their fellow-citizens; and carried their fury ſo far, that, one miſerable fugitive having fled to the temple, they cut off his hands by which he clung to the gates; and carrying him out of holy ground, immediately murdered him. *By this impiety*, ſays Herodotus [100], (not by the other many cruel aſſaſſinations), *they offended the gods, and contracted an inexpiable guilt.*

Nay, if we ſhould ſuppoſe, what never happens, that a popular religion were found, in which it was expreſsly declared, that nothing but morality could gain the divine favor; if an order of prieſts were inſtitued to inculcate this opinion, in daily ſermons,

[99] Called Dictator clavis figendæ cauſa. T. Livii l. vii. c. 3.

[100] Lib. vi.

and with all the arts of perſuaſion; yet ſo inveterate are the people's prejudices, that, for want of ſome other ſuperſtition, they would make the very attendance on theſe ſermons the eſſentials of religion, rather than place them in virtue and good morals. The ſublime prologue of Zaleucus's [91] laws inſpired not the Locrians, ſo far as we can learn, with any ſounder notions of the meaſures of acceptance with the deity, than were familiar to the other Greeks.

This obſervation, then, holds univerſally: but ſtill one may be at ſome loſs to account for it. It is not ſufficient to obſerve, that the people, every where, degrade their deities into a ſimilitude with themſelves, and conſider them merely as a ſpecies of human creatures, ſomewhat more potent and intelligent. This will not remove the difficulty. For there is no *man* ſo ſtupid, as that, judging by his natural reaſon, he would not eſteem virtue and honeſty the moſt valuable qualities which any perſon could poſſeſs. Why not aſcribe the ſame ſentiment to his deity? Why not make all religion, or the chief part of it, to conſiſt in theſe attainments?

Nor is it ſatisfactory to ſay, that the practice of morality is more difficult than that of ſuperſtition; and is therefore rejected. For, not to mention the exceſſive penances of the *Brachmans* and *Talapoins;* it is certain, that the *Rhamadan* of the Turks, during which the poor wretches, for many days, often in the hotteſt months of the year, and in ſome of the hotteſt climates of the world, remain without eating

[91] To be found in Diod. Sic. lib. xii.

or drinking from the riſing to the ſetting ſun; this *Rhamadan*, I ſay, muſt be more ſevere than the practice of any moral duty, even to the moſt vicious and depraved of mankind. The four lents of the Muſcovites, and the auſterities of ſome Roman Chatholics, appear more diſagreeable than meekneſs and benevolence. In ſhort, all virtue, when men are reconciled to it by ever ſo little practice, is agreeable: all ſuperſtition is for ever odious and burdenſome.

Perhaps the following account may be received as a true ſolution of the difficulty. The duties which a man performs as friend or parent, ſeem merely owing to his benefactor or children; nor can he be wanting to theſe duties without breaking through all the ties of nature and morality. A ſtrong inclination may prompt him to the performance: a ſentiment of order and moral obligation joins its force to theſe natural ties: and the whole man, if truly virtuous, is drawn to his duty, without any effort or endeavour. Even with regard to the virtues which are more auſtere, and more founded on reflection, ſuch as public ſpirit, filial duty, temperance, or integrity; the moral obligation, in our apprehenſion, removes all pretenſion to religious merit; and the virtuous conduct is deemed no more than what we owe to ſociety and to ourſelves. In all this, a ſuperſtitious man finds nothing which he has properly performed for the ſake of this deity, or which can peculiarly recommend him to the divine favor and protection. He conſiders not, that the moſt genuine method of ſerving the divinity is by

promoting the happineſs of his creatures. He ſtill looks out for ſome more immediate ſervice of the Supreme Being, in order to allay thoſe terrors with which he is haunted. And any practice recommended to him, which either ſerves to no purpoſe in life, or offers the ſtrongeſt violence to his natural inclinations; that practice he will the more readily embrace, on account of thoſe very circumſtances which ſhould make him abſolutely reject it. It ſeems the more purely religious, becauſe it proceeds from no mixture of any other motive or conſideration. And if, for its ſake, he ſacrifices much of his eaſe and quiet, his claim of merit appears ſtill to riſe upon him in proportion to the zeal and devotion which he diſcovers. In reſtoring a loan, or paying a debt, his divinity is nowiſe beholden to him; becauſe theſe acts of juſtice are what he was bound to perform, and what many would have performed, were there no God in the univerſe. But if he faſt a day, or give himſelf a ſound whipping, this has a direct reference, in his opinion, to the ſervice of God. No other motive could engage him to ſuch auſterities. By theſe diſtinguiſhed marks of devotion, he has now acquired the divine favor; and may expect, in recompence, protection and ſafety in this world, and eternal happineſs in the next.

Hence the greateſt crimes have been found, in many inſtances, compatible with a ſuperſtitious piety and devotion: Hence it is juſtly regarded as unſafe to draw any certain inference in favor of a man's morals, from the fervor or ſtrictneſs of his religious exerciſes, even though he himſelf believe them

ſincere. Nay, it has been obſerved, that enormities of the blackeſt die have been rather apt to produce ſuperſtitious terrors, and increaſe the religious paſſion. Bomilcar, having formed a conſpiracy for aſſaſſinating at once the whole ſenate of Carthage, and invading the liberties of his country, loſt the opportunity, from a continual regard to omens and propheciés. *Thoſe who undertake the moſt criminal and moſt dangerous enterpriſes, are commonly the moſt ſuperſtitious;* as an ancient hiſtorian [92] remarks on this occaſion. Their devotion and ſpiritual faith riſe with their fears. Catiline was not contented with the eſtabliſhed deities, and received rites of the national religion: His anxious terrors made him ſeek new inventions of this kind [93]; which he never probably had dreamed of, had he remained a good citizen, and obedient to the laws of his country.

To which we may add, that after the commiſſion of crimes, there ariſe remorſes and ſecret horrors, which give no reſt to the mind, but make it have recourſe to religious rites and ceremonies, as expiations of its offences. Whatever weakens or diſorders the internal frame promotes the intereſts of ſuperſtition: And nothing is more deſtructive to them than a manly, ſteady virtue, which either preſerves us from diſaſtrous, melancholy accidents, or teaches us to bear them. During ſuch calm ſunſhine of the mind, theſe ſpectres of falſe divinity never make their appearance. On the other hand, while we

[92] Diod. Sic. lib. xv.

[93] Cic. Catil. i. Salluſt. de bello Catil.

abandon ourſelves to the natural undiſciplined ſuggeſtions of our timid and anxious hearts, every kind of barbarity is aſcribed to the Supreme Being, from the terrors with which we are agitated; and every kind of caprice, from the methods which we embrace in order to appeaſe him. *Barbarity, caprice;* theſe qualities, however nominally diſguiſed, we may univerſally obſerve, from the ruling character of the deity in popular religions. Even prieſts, inſtead of correcting theſe depraved ideas of mankind, have often been found ready to foſter and encourage them. The more tremendous the divinity is repreſented, the more tame and ſubmiſſive do men become to his miniſters; and the more unaccountable the meaſures of acceptance required by him, the more neceſſary does it become to abandon our natural reaſon, and yield to their ghoſtly guidance and direction. Thus it may be allowed, that the artifices of men aggravate our natural infirmities and follies of this kind, but never originally beget them. Their root ſtrikes deeper into the mind, and ſprings from the eſſential and univerſal properties of human nature.

Sect. XV. *General Corollary.*

Though the ſtupidity of men, barbarous and uninſtructed, be ſo great, that they may not ſee a ſovereign author in the more obvious works of nature, to which they are ſo much familiarized; yet it ſcarcely ſeems poſſible, that any one of good underſtanding ſhould reject that idea, when once it is ſuggeſted to him. A purpoſe, and intention, a deſign is evident in every thing; and when our comprehenſion is ſo far enlarged as to contemplate the firſt riſe of this viſible ſyſtem, we muſt adopt, with the ſtrongeſt conviction, the idea of ſome intelligent cauſe or author. The uniform maxims too, which prevail throughout the whole frame of the univerſe, naturally, if not neceſſarily, lead us to conceive this intelligence as ſingle and undivided, where the prejudices of education oppoſe not ſo reaſonable a theory. Even the contrarieties of nature, by diſcovering themſelves every where, become proofs of ſome conſiſtent plan, and eſtabliſh one ſingle purpoſe or intention, however inexplicable and incomprehenſible.

Good and ill are univerſally intermingled and confounded; happineſs and miſery, wiſdom and folly, virtue and vice. Nothing is pure and entirely of a piece. All advantages are attended with diſadvantages. An univerſal compenſation prevails in all conditions of being and exiſtence. And it is not poſſible for us, by our moſt chimerical wiſhes, to

form the idea of a ſtation or ſituation altogether deſirable. The draughts of life, according to the poet's fiction, are always mixed from the veſſels on each hand of Jupiter: Or if any cup be preſented altogether pure, it is drawn only, as the ſame poet tells us, from the left-handed veſſel.

The more exquiſite any good is, of which a ſmall ſpecimen is afforded us, the ſharper is the evil allied to it; and few exceptions are found to this uniform law of nature. The moſt ſprightly wit borders on madneſs; the higheſt effuſions of joy produce the deepeſt melancholy; the moſt raviſhing pleaſures are attended with the moſt cruel laſſitude and diſguſt; the moſt flattering hopes make way for the ſevereſt diſappointments. And, in general, no courſe of life has ſuch ſafety (for happineſs is not to be dreamed of) as the temperate and moderate, which maintains, as far as poſſible, a mediocrity, and a kind of inſenſibility in every thing.

As the good, the great, the ſublime, the raviſhing, are found eminently in the genuine principles of theiſm; it may be expected, from the analogy of nature, that the baſe, the abſurd, the mean, the terrifying, will be equally diſcovered in religious fictions and chimeras.

The univerſal propenſity to believe in inviſible, intelligent power, if not an original inſtinct, being at leaſt a general attendant of human nature, may be conſidered as a kind of mark or ſtamp, which the divine workman has ſet upon his work; and nothing ſurely can more dignify mankind, than to be thus ſelected from all other parts of the creation, and to

bear the image or impreſſion of the univerſal Creator. But conſult this image as it appears in the popular religions of the world. How is the deity disfigured in our repreſentations of him! What caprice, abſurdity, and immorality are attributed to him! How much is he degraded even below the character, which we ſhould naturally, in common life, aſcribe to a man of ſenſe and virtue!

What a noble privilege is it of human reaſon to attain the knowledge of the ſupreme Being; and, from the viſible works of nature, be enabled to infer ſo ſublime a principle as its ſupreme Creator? But turn the reverſe of the medal. Survey moſt nations and moſt ages. Examine the religious principles, which have, in fact, prevailed in the world. You will ſcarcely be perſuaded, that they are any thing but ſick men's dreams: Or perhaps will regard them more as the playſome whimſies of monkies in human ſhape, than the ſerious, poſitive, dogmatical aſſeverations of a being, who dignifies himſelf with the name of rational.

Hear the verbal proteſtations of all men: Nothing ſo certain as their religious tenets. Examine their lives: You will ſcarcely think that they repoſe the ſmalleſt confidence in them.

The greateſt and trueſt zeal gives us no ſecurity againſt hypocriſy: The moſt open impiety is attended with a ſecret dread and compunction.

No theological abſurdities ſo glaring that they have not, ſometimes, been embraced by men of the greateſt and moſt cultivated underſtanding. No religious precepts ſo rigorous that they have not been

adopted by the moſt voluptuous and moſt abandoned of men.

Ignorance is the mother of devotion: A maxim that is proverbial, and confirmed by general experience. Look out for a people entirely deſtitute of religion: If you find them at all, be aſſured, that they are but few degrees removed from brutes.

What ſo pure as ſome of the morals included in ſome theological ſyſtems? What ſo corrupt as ſome of the practices to which theſe ſyſtems give riſe?

The conſortable views, exhibited by the belief of futurity, are raviſhing and delightful. But how quickly vaniſh on the appearance of its terrors, which keep a more firm and durable poſſeſſion of the human mind!

The whole is a riddle, an enigma, an inexplicable myſtery. Doubt, uncertainty, ſuſpenſe of judgment, appear the only reſult of our moſt accurate ſcrutiny, concerning this ſubject. But ſuch is the frailty of human reaſon, and ſuch the irreſiſtible contagion of opinion, that even this deliberate doubt could ſcarcely be upheld; did we not enlarge our view, and oppoſing one ſpecies of ſuperſtition to another, ſet them a quarrelling; while we ourſelves, during their fury and contention, happily make our eſcape into the calm, though obſcure, regions of philoſophy.

DIALOGUES

DIALOGUES
CONCERNING
NATURAL RELIGION.

PAMPHILUS TO HERMIPPUS.

IT has been remarked, my Hermippus, that though the ancient philoſophers conveyed moſt of their inſtruction in the form of dialogue, this method of compoſition has been little practiſed in later ages, and has ſeldom ſucceeded in the hands of thoſe who have attempted it. Accurate and regular argument, indeed, ſuch as is now expected of philoſophical inquirers, naturally throws a man into the methodical and didactic manner; where he can immediately, without preparation, explain the point at which he aims; and thence proceed, without interruption, to deduce the proofs on which it is eſtabliſhed. To deliver a Syſtem in converſation, ſcarcely appears natural; and while the dialogue-writer deſires, by departing from the direct ſtyle of compoſition, to give a freer air to his performance, and avoid the appearance of *Author* and *Reader*, he is apt to run into a worſe inconvenience, and convey the image of *Pedagogue* and *Pupil*. Or if he carries on the diſpute in the natural ſpirit of good company, by

throwing in a variety of topics, and preſerving a proper balance among the ſpeakers; he often loſes ſo much time in preparations and tranſitions, that the reader will ſcarcely think himſelf compenſated by all the graces of dialogue, for the order, brevity, and preciſion, which are ſacrificed to them.

There are ſome ſubjects, however, to which dialogue-writing is peculiarly adapted, and where it is ſtill preferable to the direct and ſimple method of compoſition.

Any point of doctrine, which is ſo *obvious* that it ſcarcely admits of diſpute, but at the ſame time ſo *important* that it cannot be too often inculcated, ſeems to require ſome ſuch method of handling it; where the novelty of the manner may compenſate the triteneſs of the ſubject; where the vivacity of converſation may enforce the precept; and where the variety of lights, preſented by various perſonages and characters, may appear neither tedious nor redundant.

Any queſtion of philoſophy, on the other hand, which is ſo *obſcure* and *uncertain*, that human reaſon can reach no fixed determination with regard to it; if it ſhould be treated at all, ſeems to lead us naturally into the ſtyle of dialogue and converſation. Reaſonable men may be allowed to differ, where no one can reaſonably be poſitive: Oppoſite ſentiments, even without any deciſion, afford an agreeable amuſement: and if the ſubject be curious and intereſting, the book carries us, in a manner, into company; and unites the two greateſt and pureſt pleaſures of human life, ſtudy, and ſociety.

Happily, theſe circumſtances are all to be found in the ſubject of Natural Religion. What truth ſo obvious, ſo certain, as the Being of a God, which the moſt ignorant ages have acknowledged, for which the moſt refined geniuſes have ambitiouſly ſtriven to produce new proofs and arguments? What truth ſo important as this, which is the ground of all our hopes, the ſureſt foundation of morality, the firmeſt ſupport of ſociety, and the only principle which ought never to be a moment abſent from our thoughts and meditations? But in treating of this obvious and important truth; what obſcure queſtions occur, concerning the Nature of that divine Being; his attributes, his decrees, his plan of providence? Theſe have been always ſubjected to the diſputations of men: Concerning theſe, human reaſon has not reached any certain determination: But theſe are topics ſo intereſting, that we cannot reſtrain our reſtleſs inquiry with regard to them; though nothing but doubt, uncertainty, and contradiction, have as yet been the reſult of our moſt accurate reſearches.

This I had lately occaſion to obſerve, while I paſſed, as uſual, part of the ſummer-ſeaſon with Cleanthes; and was preſent at thoſe converſations of his with Philo and Demea, of which I gave you lately ſome imperfect account. Your curioſity, you then told me, was ſo excited, that I muſt of neceſſity enter into a more exact detail of their reaſonings, and diſplay thoſe various ſyſtems which they advanced with regard to ſo delicate a ſubject as that of Natural Religion. The remarkable contraſt in their characters ſtill farther raiſed your expectations;

while you oppoſed the accurate philoſophical turn of Cleanthes to the careleſs ſcepticiſm of Philo, or compared either of their diſpoſitions with the rigid inflexible orthodoxy of Demea. My youth rendered me a mere auditor of their diſputes; and that curioſity natural to the early ſeaſon of life, has ſo deeply imprinted in my memory the whole chain and connexion of their arguments, that, I hope, I ſhall not omit or confound any conſiderable part of them in the recital.

PART I.

After I joined the company, whom I found ſitting in Cleanthes's library, Demea paid Cleanthes ſome compliments, on the great care which he took of my education, and on his unwearied perſeverance and conſtancy in all his friendſhips. The father of Pamphilius, ſaid he, was your intimate friend: The ſon is your pupil; and may indeed be regarded as your adopted ſon, were we to judge by the pains which you beſtow in conveying to him every uſeful branch of literature and ſcience. You are no more wanting, I am perſuaded, in prudence than in induſtry. I ſhall, therefore, communicate to you a maxim which I have obſerved with regard to my own children, that I may learn how far it agrees with your practice. The method I follow in their education is founded on the ſaying of an ancient, "*That ſtudents of philoſophy ought firſt to learn* "*Logics, then Ethics, next Phyſics, laſt of all the*

" *nature of the Gods* [a]." This ſcience of Natural Theology, according to him, being the moſt profound and abſtruſe of any, required the matureſt judgment in its ſtudents; and none but a mind, enriched with all the other ſciences, can ſafely be intruſted with it.

Are you ſo late, ſays Philo, in teaching your children the principles of religion? Is there no danger of their neglecting, or rejecting altogether, thoſe opinions, of which they have heard ſo little during the whole courſe of their education? It is only as a ſcience, replied Demea, ſubjected to human reaſoning and diſputation, that I poſtpone the ſtudy of Natural Theology. To ſeaſon their minds with early piety, is my chief care; and by continual precept and inſtruction, and I hope too by example, I imprint deeply on their tender minds a habitual reverence for all the principles of religion. While they paſs through every other ſcience, I ſtill remark the uncertainty of each part; the eternal diſputations of men; the obſcurity of all philoſophy; and the ſtrange, ridiculous concluſions, which ſome of the greateſt geniuſes have derived from the principles of mere human reaſon. Having thus tamed their mind to a proper ſubmiſſion and ſelf-diffidence, I have no longer any ſcruple of opening to them the greateſt myſteries of religion; nor apprehend any danger from that aſſuming arrogance of philoſophy, which may lead them to reject the moſt eſtabliſhed doctrines and opinions.

[a] Chryſippus apud Plut. de repug. Stoicorum.

Your precaution, ſays Philo, of ſeaſoning your children's minds early with piety, is certainly very reaſonable; and no more than is requiſite in this profane and irreligious age. But what I chiefly admire in your plan of education, is your method of drawing advantage from the very principles of philoſophy and learning, which by inſpiring pride and ſelf-ſufficiency, have commonly, in all ages, been found ſo deſtructive to the principles of religion. The vulgar, indeed, we may remark, who are unacquainted with ſcience and profound inquiry, obſerving the endleſs diſputes of the learned, have commonly a thorough contempt for Philoſophy; and rivet themſelves the faſter, by that means, in the great points of theology which have been taught them. Thoſe who enter a little into ſtudy and inquiry, finding many appearances of evidence in doctrines the neweſt and moſt extraordinary, think nothing too difficult for human reaſon; and preſumptuouſly breaking through all fences, profane the inmoſt ſanctuaries of the temple. But Cleanthes will, I hope, agree with me, that, after we have abandoned ignorance, the ſureſt remedy, there is ſtill one expedient left to prevent this profane liberty. Let Demea's principles be improved and cultivated: Let us become thoroughly ſenſible of the weakneſs, blindneſs, and narrow limits, of human reaſon: Let us duly conſider its uncertainty and endleſs contrarieties, even in ſubjects of common life and practice: Let the errors and deceits of our very ſenſes be ſet before us; the inſuperable difficulties which attend firſt principles in all ſyſtems; the contradictions which adhere to the very ideas of matter,

cauſe, and effect, extenſion, ſpace, time, motion; and, in a word, quantity of all kinds, the object of the only ſcience that can fairly pretend to any certainty or evidence. When theſe topics are diſplayed in their full light, as they are by ſome philoſophers and almoſt all divines; who can retain ſuch confidence in this frail faculty of reaſon, as to pay any regard to its determinations in points ſo ſublime, ſo abſtruſe, ſo remote from common life and experience? When the coherence of the parts of a ſtone, or even that compoſition of parts which renders it extended; when theſe familiar objects, I ſay, are ſo inexplicable, and contain circumſtances ſo repugnant and contradictory; with what aſſurance can we decide concerning the origin of worlds, or trace their hiſtory from eternity to eternity?

While Philo pronounced theſe words, I could obſerve a ſmile in the countenance both of Demea and Cleanthes. That of Demea ſeemed to imply an unreſerved ſatisfaction in the doctrines delivered: But, in Cleanthes's features, I could diſtinguiſh an air of fineſſe; as if he perceived ſome raillery or artificial malice in the reaſonings of Philo.

You propoſe then, Philo, ſaid Cleanthes, to erect religious faith on philoſophical ſcepticiſm; and you think, that if certainty or evidence be expelled from every other ſubject of inquiry, it will all retire to theſe theological doctrines, and there acquire a ſuperior force and authority. Whether your ſcepticiſm be as abſolute and ſincere as your pretend, we ſhall learn by and by when the company breaks up: We ſhall then ſee whether you go out at the door

or the window; and whether you really doubt if your body has gravity, or can be injured by its fall; according to popular opinion, derived from our fallacious ſenſes, and more fallacious experience. And this conſideration, Demea, may, I think, fairly ſerve to abate our ill-will to this humorous ſect of the ſceptics. If they be thoroughly in earneſt, they will not long trouble the world with their doubts, cavils, and diſputes: If they be only in jeſt, they are, perhaps, bad railers; but can never be very dangerous, either to the ſtate, to philoſophy, or to religion.

In reality, Philo, continued he, it ſeems certain, that though a man, in a fluſh of humor, after intenſe reflection on the many contradictions and imperfections of human reaſon, may entirely renounce all belief and opinion; it is impoſſible for him to perſevere in this total ſcepticiſm, or make it appear in his conduct for a few hours. External objects preſs in upon him: Paſſions ſolicit him: His philoſophical melancholy diſſipates; and even the utmoſt violence upon his own temper will not be able, during any time, to preſerve the poor appearance of ſcepticiſm. And for what reaſon impoſe on himſelf ſuch a violence? This is a point in which it will be impoſſible for him ever to ſatisfy himſelf, conſiſtently with his ſceptical principles: So that upon the whole nothing could be more ridiculous than the principles of the ancient Pyrrhonians; if in reality they endeavoured, as is pretended, to extend, throughout, the ſame ſcepticiſm, which they had learned from the declamations of their ſchools, and which they ought to have confined to them.

In this view, there appears a great reſemblance between the ſects of the Stoics and Pyrrhonians, though perpetual antagoniſts: and both of them ſeem founded on this erroneous maxim, That what a man can perform ſometimes, and in ſome diſpoſitions, he can perform always, and in every diſpoſition. When the mind, by Stoical reflections, is elevated into a ſublime enthuſiaſm of virtue, and ſtrongly ſmit with any *ſpecies* of honor or public good, the utmoſt bodily pain and ſufferings will not prevail over ſuch a high ſenſe of duty; and it is poſſible, perhaps, by its means, even to ſmile and exult in the midſt of tortures. If this ſometimes may be the caſe in fact and reality, much more may a philoſopher, in his ſchool, or even in his cloſet, work himſelf up to ſuch an enthuſiaſm, and ſupport in imagination the acuteſt pain or moſt calamitous event which he can poſſibly conceive. But how ſhall he ſupport this enthuſiaſm itſelf? The bent of his mind relaxes, and cannot be recalled at pleaſure: Avocations lead him aſtray: Misfortunes attack him unawares: And the *philoſopher* ſinks by degrees into the *plebeian*.

I allow of your compariſon between the Stoics and Sceptics, replied Philo. But you may obſerve, at the ſame time, that though the mind cannot, in Stoiciſm, ſupport the higheſt flights of philoſophy; yet, even when it ſinks lower, it ſtill retains ſomewhat of its former diſpoſition; and the effects of the Stoic's reaſoning will appear in his conduct in common life, and through the whole tenor of his actions. The ancient ſchools, particularly

that of Zeno, produced examples of virtue and conſtancy which ſeem aſtoniſhing to preſent times.

> Vain Wiſdom all and falſe Philoſophy.
> Yet with a pleaſing ſorcery could charm
> Pain, for a while, or anguiſh; and excite
> Fallacious Hope, or arm the obdurate breaſt
> With ſtubborn Patience, as with triple ſteel.

In like manner, if a man has accuſtomed himſelf to ſceptical conſiderations on the uncertainty and narrow limits of reaſon, he will not entirely forget them when he turns his reflection on other ſubjects; but in all his philoſophical principles and reaſoning, I dare not ſay in his common conduct, he will be found different from thoſe, who either never formed any opinions in the caſe, or have entertained ſentiments more favorable to human reaſon.

To whatever length any one may puſh his ſpeculative principles of ſcepticiſm, he muſt act, I own, and live, and converſe, like other men; and for this conduct he is not obliged to give any other reaſon, than the abſolute neceſſity he lies under of ſo doing. If he ever carries his ſpeculations farther than this neceſſity conſtrains him, and philoſophizes either on natural and moral ſubjects, he is allured by a certain pleaſure and ſatisfaction which he finds in employing himſelf after that manner. He conſiders beſides, that every one, even in common life, is conſtrained to have more or leſs of this philoſophy; that from our earlieſt infancy we make continual advances in forming more general principles of conduct and reaſoning; that the larger experience we acquire, and the ſtronger reaſon we are endued with, we always

render our principles the more general and comprehenſive: and that what we call *philoſophy* is nothing but a more regular and methodical operation of the ſame kind. To philoſophize on ſuch ſubjects is nothing eſſentially different from reaſoning on common life; and we may only expect greater ſtability, if not greater truth, from our pliloſophy, on account of its exacter and more ſcrupulous method of proceeding.

But when we look beyond human affairs and the proprieties of the ſurrounding bodies: When we carry our ſpeculations into the two eternities, before and after the preſent ſtate of things, into the creation and formation of the univerſe; the exiſtence and proprieties of ſpirits; the powers and operations of one univerſal Spirit, exiſting without beginning and without end; omnipotent, omniſcient, immutable, infinite, and incomprehenſible: We muſt be far removed from the ſmalleſt tendency to ſcepticiſm not to be apprehenſive, that we have here got beyond the reach of our faculties. So long as we confine our ſpeculations to trade, or morals, or politics, or criticiſm, we make appeals, every moment, to common ſenſe and experience, which ſtrengthen our philoſophical concluſions, and remove (at leaſt in part) the ſuſpicion which we ſo juſtly entertain with regard to every reaſoning that is very ſubtile and refined. But, in theological reaſonings, we have not this advantage; while at the ſame time we are employed upon objects, which, we muſt be ſenſible, are too large for our graſp, and, of all others, require moſt to be familiarized to our apprehenſion. We

are like foreigners in a ſtrange country, to whom every thing muſt ſeem ſuſpicious, and who are in danger every moment of tranſgreſſing againſt the laws and cuſtoms of the people with whom they live and converſe. We know not how far we ought to truſt our vulgar methods of reaſoning in ſuch a ſubject, ſince, even in common life, and in that province which is peculiarly appropriated to them, we cannot account for them, and are entirely guided by a kind of inſtinct or neceſſity in employing them.

All ſceptics pretend, that, if reaſon be conſidered in an abſtract view, it furniſhes invincible arguments againſt itſelf, and that we could never retain any conviction or aſſurance, on any ſubject, were not the ſceptical reaſonings ſo refined and ſubtile, that they are not able to counterpoiſe the more ſolid and more natural arguments derived from the ſenſes and experience. But it is evident, whenever our arguments loſe this advantage, and run wide of common life, that the moſt refined ſcepticiſm comes to be upon a footing with them, and is able to oppoſe and counterbalance them. The one has no more weight than the other. The mind muſt remain in ſuſpenſe between them; and it is that very ſuſpenſe or balance which is the triumph of ſcepticiſm.

But I obſerve, ſays Cleanthes, with regard to you, Philo, and all ſpeculative ſceptics, that your doctrine and practice are as much at variance in the moſt abſtruſe points of theory as in the conduct of common life. Wherever evidence diſcovers itſelf, you adhere to it, notwithſtanding your pretended ſcepticiſm; and I can obſerve, too, ſome of your

ſect to be as deciſive as thoſe who make greater profeſſions of certainty and aſſurance. In reality, would not a man be ridiculous, who pretended to reject Newton's explication of the wonderful phenomenon of the rainbow, becauſe that explication gives a minute anatomy of the rays of light; a ſubject, forſooth, too refined for human comprehenſion? And what would you ſay to one, who having nothing particular to object to the arguments of Copernicus and Galilæo for the motion of the earth, ſhould with-hold his aſſent, on that general principle, That theſe ſubjects were too magnificent and remote to be explained by the narrow and fallacious reaſon of mankind?

There is indeed a kind of brutiſh and ignorant ſcepticiſm, as you well obſerved, which gives the vulgar a general prejudice againſt what they do not eaſily underſtand, and makes them reject every principle which requires elaborate reaſoning to prove and eſtabliſh it. This ſpecies of ſcepticiſm is fatal to knowledge, not to religion; ſince we find, that thoſe who make greateſt profeſſion of it, give often that aſſent, not only to the great truths of Theiſm and natural Theology, but even to the moſt abſurd tenets which a traditional ſuperſtition has recommended to them. They firmly believe in witches; though they will not believe nor attend to the moſt ſimple propoſition of Euclid. But the refined and philoſophical ſceptics fall into an inconſiſtence of an oppoſite nature. They puſh their reſearches into the moſt abſtruſe corners of ſcience; and their aſſent attends them in every ſtep, proportioned to the

evidence which they meet with. They are even obliged to acknowledge, that the moſt abſtruſe and remote objects are thoſe which are beſt explained by philoſophy. Light is in reality anatomized: The true ſyſtem of the heavenly bodies is diſcovered and aſcertained. But the nouriſhment of bodies by food is ſtill an inexplicable myſtery: The coheſion of the parts of matter is ſtill incomprehenſible. Theſe ſceptics, therefore, are obliged, in every queſtion, to conſider each particular evidence apart, and proportion their aſſent to the preciſe degree of evidence which occurs. This is their practice in all natural, mathematical, moral, and political ſcience. And why not the ſame, I aſk, in the theological and religious? Why muſt concluſions of this nature be alone rejected on the general preſumption of the inſufficiency of human reaſon, without any particular diſcuſſion of the evidence? Is not ſuch an unequal conduct a plain proof of prejudice and paſſion?

Our ſenſes, you ſay, are fallacious; our underſtanding erroneous; our ideas even of the moſt familiar objects, extenſion, duration, motion, full of abſurdities and contradictions. You defy me to ſolve the difficulties, or reconcile the repugnancies, which you diſcover in them. I have not capacity for ſo great an undertaking: I have not leiſure for it: I perceive it to be ſuperfluous. Your own conduct, in every circumſtance, refutes your principles; and ſhows the firmeſt reliance on all the received maxims of ſcience, morals, prudence, and behaviour.

I ſhall never aſſent to ſo harſh an opinion as that

of a celebrated writer [a], who ſays, that the ſceptics are not a ſect of philoſophers: They are only a ſect of liars. I may, however, affirm, (I hope, without offence), that they are a ſect of jeſters or railers. But for my part, whenever I find myſelf diſpoſed to mirth and amuſement, I ſhall certainly chuſe my entertainment of a leſs perplexing and abſtruſe nature. A comedy, a novel, or at moſt a hiſtory, ſeems a more natural recreation than ſuch metaphyſical ſubtilties and abſtractions.

In vain would the ſceptic make a diſtinction between ſcience and common life, or between one ſcience and another. The arguments employed in all, if juſt, are of a ſimilar nature, and contain the ſame force and evidence. Or if there be any difference among them, the advantage lies entirely on the ſide of theology and natural religion. Many principles of mechanics are founded on very abſtruſe reaſoning; yet no man who has any pretenſions to ſcience, even no ſpeculative ſceptic, pretends to entertain the leaſt doubt with regard to them. The Copernican ſyſtem contains the moſt ſurpriſing paradox, and the moſt contrary to our natural conceptions, to appearances, and to our very ſenſes: yet even monks and inquiſitors are now conſtrained to withdraw their oppoſition to it. And ſhall Philo, a man of ſo liberal a genius, and extenſive knowledge, entertain any general undiſtinguiſhed ſcruples with regard to the religious hypotheſis, which is founded on the ſimpleſt and moſt obvious arguments,

[a] L'Art de penſer.

and, unleſs it meets with artificial obſtacles, has ſuch eaſy acceſs and admiſſion into the mind of man?

And here we may obſerve, continued he, turning himſelf towards Demea, a pretty curious circumſtance in the hiſtory of the ſciences. After the union of philoſophy with the popular religion, upon the firſt eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity, nothing was more uſual, among the religious teachers, than declamations againſt reaſon, again the ſenſes, againſt every principle derived merely from human reſearch and inquiry. All the topics of the ancient Academics were adopted by the Fathers; And thence propagated for ſeveral ages in every ſchool and pulpit throughout Chriſtendom. The Reformers embraced the ſame principles of reaſoning, or rather declamation; and all panegyrics on the excellency of faith were ſure to be interlarded with ſome ſevere ſtrokes of ſatire againſt natural reaſon. A celebrated prelate too [1], of the Romiſh communion, a man of the moſt extenſive learning, who wrote a demonſtration of Chriſtianity, has alſo compoſed a treatiſe, which contains all the cavils of the boldeſt and moſt determined Pyrrhoniſm. Locke ſeems to have been the firſt Chriſtian, who ventured openly to aſſert, that *faith* was nothing but a ſpecies of *reaſon*; that religion was only a branch of philoſophy; and that a chain of arguments, ſimilar to that which eſtabliſhed any truth in morals, politics, or phyſics, was always employed in diſcovering all the principles of theology, natural and revealed. The ill uſe which

[1] Monſ. Huet.

Bayle

Bayle and other libertines made of the philoſophical ſcepticiſm of the fathers and firſt reformers, ſtill farther propagated the judicious ſentiment of Mr. Locke: And it is now, in a manner, avowed, by all pretenders to reaſoning and philoſophy, that Atheiſt and Sceptic are almoſt ſynonymous. And as it is certain, that no man is in earneſt when he profeſſes the latter principle; I would fain hope, that there are as few who ſeriouſly maintain the former.

Don't you remember, ſaid Philo, the excellent ſaying of Lord Bacon on this head? That a little philoſophy, replied Cleanthes, makes a man an Atheiſt: A great deal converts him to religion. That is a very judicious remark too, ſaid Philo. But what I have in my eye is another paſſage, where, having mentioned David's fool, who ſaid in his heart there is no God, this great philoſopher obſerves, that the Atheiſts now-a-days have a double ſhare of folly: for they are not contented to ſay in their hearts there is no God, but they alſo utter that impiety with their lips; and are thereby guilty of multiplied indiſcretion and imprudence. Such people, though they were ever ſo much in earneſt, cannot, methinks, be very formidable.

But though you ſhould rank me in this claſs of fools, I cannot forbear communicating a remark that occurs to me, from the hiſtory of the religious and irreligious ſcepticiſm with which you have entertained us. It appears to me, that there are ſtrong ſymptoms of prieſtcraft in the whole progreſs of this affair. During ignorant ages, ſuch as thoſe which followed the diſſolution of the ancient ſchools, the

prieſts perceived, that atheiſm, deiſm, or hereſy of any kind, could only proceed from the preſumptuous queſtioning of received opinions, and from a belief that human reaſon was equal to every thing. Education had then a mighty influence over the minds of men, and was almoſt equal in force to thoſe ſuggeſtions of the ſenſes and common underſtanding, by which the moſt determined ſceptic muſt allow himſelf to be governed. But at preſent, when the influence of education is much diminiſhed, and men, from a more open commerce of the world, have learned to compare the popular principles of different nations and ages, our ſagacious divines have changed their whole ſyſtem of philoſophy, and talk the language of Stoics, Platoniſts, and Peripatetics, not that of Pyrrhonians and Academics. If we diſtruſt human reaſon, we have now no other principle to lead us into religion. Thus, ſceptics in one age, dogmatiſts in another; which-ever ſyſtem beſt ſuits the purpoſe of theſe reverend gentlemen, in giving them an aſcendant over mankind, they are ſure to make it their favorite principle and eſtabliſhed tenet.

It is very natural, ſaid Cleanthes; for men to embrace thoſe principles by which they find they can beſt defend their doctrines; nor need we have any recourſe to prieſtcraft to account for ſo reaſonable an expedient. And ſurely nothing can afford a ſtronger preſumption, that any ſet of principles are true, and ought to be embraced, than to obſerve that they tend to the confirmation of true religion, and ſerve to confound the cavils of Atheiſts, Libertines, and Freethinkers of all denominations.

PART II.

I MUST own, Cleanthes, ſaid Demea, that nothing can more ſurpriſe me, than the light in which you have all along put this argument. By the whole tenor of your diſcourſe, one would imagine that you were maintaining the Being of a God, againſt the cavils of Atheiſts and Infidels; and were neceſſitated to become a champion for that fundamental principle of all religion. But this, I hope, is not by any means, a queſtion among us. No man, no man at leaſt of common ſenſe, I am perſuaded, ever entertained a ſerious doubt with regard to a truth ſo certain and ſelf-evident. The queſtion is not concerning the being, but the nature, of God. This I affirm, from the infirmities of human underſtanding, to be altogether incomprehenſible and unknown to us. The eſſence of that Supreme Mind, his attributes, the manner of his exiſtence, the very nature of his duration; theſe, and every particular which regards ſo divine a being, are myſterious to men. Finite, weak, and blind creatures, we ought to humble ourſelves in his auguſt preſence; and, conſcious of our frailties, adore in ſilence his infinite perfections, which eye hath not ſeen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive. They are covered in a deep cloud from human curioſity: it is profaneneſs to attempt penetrating through theſe ſacred obſcurities: and next to the impiety of denying his exiſtence, is the temerity of prying into his nature and eſſence, decrees and attributes.

But leſt you ſhould think that my *piety* has here got the better of my *philoſophy*, I ſhall ſupport my opinion, if it needs any ſupport, by a very great authority. I might cite all the divines, almoſt, from the foundation of Chriſtianity, who have ever treated of this or any other theological ſubject: but I ſhall confine myſelf at preſent to one equally celebrated for piety and philoſophy. It is father Malebranche who, I remember, thus expreſſes himſelf*. "One ought not ſo much (ſays he) "to call God a ſpirit, in order to expreſs "poſitively what he is, as in order to ſignify that "he is not matter. He is a Being infinitely per- "fect; of this we cannot doubt. But in the ſame "manner as we ought not to imagine, even ſup- "poſing him corporeal, that he is clothed with "a human body, as the Anthropomorphites af- "ſerted, under color that that figure was the moſt "perfect of any; ſo neither ought we to imagine, "that the Spirit of God has human ideas, or bears "any reſemblance to our ſpirit; under color that "we know nothing more perfect than a human "mind. We ought rather to believe, that as he "comprehends the perfections of matter without "being material ..... he comprehends alſo the "perfections of created ſpirits, without being "ſpirit, in the manner we conceive ſpirit: that "his true name is, *He that is;* or, in other words, "Being without reſtriction, All Being, the Being "Infinite and Univerſal."

* Recherches de la Vérité, liv. 3. cap. 9.

After ſo great an authority, Demea, replied Philo, as that which you have produced, and a thouſand more which you might produce, it would appear ridiculous in me to add my ſentiment, or expreſs my approbation, of your doctrine. But ſurely, where reaſonable men treat theſe ſubjects, the queſtion can never be concerning the *Being*, but only the *Nature*, of the Deity. The former truth, as you will obſerve, is unqueſtionable and ſelf-evident. Nothing exiſts without a cauſe; and the original cauſe of this univerſe (whatever it be) we call God; and piouſly aſcribe to him every ſpecies of perfection. Whoever ſcruples this fundamental truth, deſerves every puniſhment which can be inflicted among philoſophers, to wit, the greateſt ridicule, contempt, and diſapprobation. But as all perfection is entirely relative, we ought never to imagine that we comprehend the attributes of this divine Being, or to ſuppoſe that his perfections have any analogy or likeneſs to the perfections of a human creature. Wiſdom, Thought Deſign, Knowledge; theſe we juſtly aſcribe to him; becauſe theſe words are honorable among men, and we have no other language or other conceptions by which we can expreſs our adoration of him. But let us beware, leſt we think, that our ideas any wiſe correſpond to his perfections, or that his attributes have any reſemblance to theſe qualities among men. He is infinitely, ſuperior to our limited view and comprehenſion; and is more the object of worſhip in the temple, than of diſputation in the ſchools.

In reality, Cleanthes, continued he, there is no need of having recourſe to that affected ſcepticiſm, ſo diſpleaſing to you, in order to come at this determination. Our ideas reach no farther than our experience: we have no experience of divine attributes and operations: I need not conclude my ſyllogiſm; you can draw the inference yourſelf. And it is a pleaſure to me (and I hope to you too) that juſt reaſoning and ſound piety here concur in the ſame concluſion, and both of them eſtabliſh the adorably myſterious and incomprehenſible nature of the ſupreme Being.

Not to loſe any time in circumlocutions, ſaid Cleanthes, addreſſing himſelf to Demea, much leſs in replying to the pious declamations of Philo; I ſhall briefly explain how I conceive this matter. Look round the world; contemplate the whole and every part of it; you will find it to be nothing but one great machine, ſubdivided into an infinite number of leſſer machines, which again admit of ſubdiviſions to a degree beyond what human ſenſes and faculties can trace and explain. All theſe various machines, and even their moſt minute parts, are adjuſted to each other with an accuracy which raviſhes into admiration all men who have ever contemplated them. The curious adapting of means to ends, throughout all nature, reſembles exactly, though it much exceeds, the productions of human contrivance; of human deſign, thought, wiſdom, and intelligence. Since therefore the effects reſemble each other, we are led to infer, by all the rules of analogy, that the cauſes alſo reſemble, and that the Author of Nature is ſomewhat ſimilar to the mind of

man; though poſſeſſed of much larger faculties, proportioned to the grandeur of the work which he has executed. By this argument *à poſteriori*, and by this argument alone, do we prove at once the exiſtence of a Deity, and his ſimilarity to human mind and intelligence.

I ſhall be ſo free, Cleanthes, ſaid Demea, as to tell you, that from the beginning I could not approve of your concluſion concerning the ſimilarity of the Deity to men; ſtill leſs can I approve of the mediums by which you endeavour to eſtabliſh it.—What! no demonſtration of the Being of God! No abſtract arguments! No proofs *à priori!* Are theſe, which have hitherto been ſo much inſiſted on by philoſophers, all fallacy, all ſophiſm; Can we reach no farther in this ſubject than experience and probability? I will not ſay, that this is betraying the cauſe of a Deity; but ſurely, by this affected candor, you give advantages to Atheiſts, which they never could obtain by the mere dint of argument and reaſoning.

What I chiefly ſcruple in this ſubject, ſaid Philo, is not ſo much that all religious arguments are by Cleanthes reduced to experience, as that they appear not to be even the moſt certain and irrefragable of that inferior kind. That a ſtone will fall, that fire will burn, that the earth has ſolidity, we have obſerved a thouſand and a thouſand times; and when any new inſtance of this nature is preſented, we draw without heſitation the accuſtomed inference. The exact ſimilarity of the caſes gives us a perfect aſſurance of a ſimilar event; and a ſtronger

evidence is never deſired nor ſought after. But wherever you depart in the leaſt from the ſimilarity of the caſes, you diminiſh proportionably the evidence; and may at laſt bring it to a very weak *analogy*, which is confeſſedly liable to error and uncertainty. After having experienced the circulation of the blood in human creatures, we make no doubt that it takes place in Titius and Mævius: but from its circulation in frogs and fiſhes, it is only a preſumption, though a ſtrong one, from analogy, that it takes place in men and other animals. The analogical reaſoning is much weaker, when we infer the circulation of the ſap in vegetables from our experience that the blood circulates in animals; and thoſe who haſtily followed that imperfect analogy, are found, by more accurate experiments, to have been miſtaken.

If we ſee a houſe, Cleanthes, we conclude, with the greateſt certainty, that it had an architect or builder; becauſe this is preciſely that ſpecies of effect which we have experienced to proceed from that ſpecies of cauſe. But ſurely you will not affirm, that the univerſe bears ſuch a reſemblance to a houſe, that we can with the ſame certainty infer a ſimilar cauſe, or that the analogy is here entire and perfect. The diſſimilitude is ſo ſtriking, that the utmoſt you can here pretend to is a gueſs, a conjecture, a preſumption concerning a ſimilar cauſe; and how that pretenſion will be received in the world, I leave you to conſider.

It would ſurely be very ill received, replied Cleanthes; and I ſhould be deſervedly blamed and

deteſted, did I allow, that the proofs of a Deity amounted to no more than a gueſs or conjecture. But is the whole adjuſtment of means to ends in a houſe and in the univerſe ſo ſlight a reſemblance? The economy of final cauſes? The order, proportion, and arrangement of every part? Steps of a ſtair are plainly contrived, that human legs may uſe them in mounting; and this inference is certain and infallible. Human legs are alſo contrived for walking and mounting; and this inference, I allow, is not altogether ſo certain, becauſe of the diſſimilarity which you remark; but does it, therefore, deſerve the name only of preſumption or conjecture?

Good God! cried Demea, interrupting him, where are we? Zealous defenders of religion allow, that the proofs of a Deity fall ſhort of perfect evidence! And you, Philo, on whoſe aſſiſtance I depended in proving the adorable myſteriouſneſs of the Divine Nature, do you aſſent to all theſe extravagant opinions of Cleanthes? For what other name can I give them? Or why ſpare my cenſure, when ſuch principles are advanced, ſupported by ſuch an authority, before ſo young a man as Pamphilius?

You ſeem not to apprehend, replied Philo, that I argue with Cleanthes in his own way; and by ſhowing him the dangerous conſequences of his tenets, hope at laſt to reduce him to our opinion. But what ſticks moſt with you, I obſerve, is the repreſentation which Cleanthes has made of the argument *à poſteriori*; and finding that that argument is likely to eſcape your hold and vaniſh into air, you think it ſo diſguiſed, that you can ſcarcely believe it to be ſet

in its true light. Now, however much I may diſſent, in other reſpects, from the dangerous principles of Cleanthes, I muſt allow, that he has fairly repreſented that argument; and I ſhall endeavour ſo to ſtate the matter to you, that you will entertain no farther ſcruples with regard to it.

Were a man to abſtract from every thing which he knows or has ſeen, he would be altogether incapable, merely from his own ideas, to determine what kind of ſcene the univerſe muſt be, or to give the preference to one ſtate or ſituation of things above another. For as nothing which he clearly conceives could be eſteemed impoſſible or implying a contradiction, every chimera of his fancy would be upon an equal footing; nor could he aſſign any juſt reaſon, why he adheres to one idea or ſyſtem, and rejects the others which are equally poſſible.

Again; after he opens his eyes, and contemplates the world as it really is, it would be impoſſible for him, at firſt, to aſſign the cauſe of any one event, much leſs of the whole of things or of the univerſe. He might ſet his Fancy a rambling; and ſhe might bring him in an infinite variety of reports and repreſentations. Theſe would all be poſſible; but being all equally poſſible, he would never, of himſelf, give a ſatisfactory account for his preferring one of them to the reſt. Experience alone can point out to him the true cauſe of any phenomenon.

Now according to this method of reaſoning, Demea, it follows (and is, indeed, tacitly allowed by Cleanthes himſelf), that order, arrangement, or the adjuſtment of final cauſes, is not, of itſelf, any

proof of deſign; but only ſo far as it has been experienced to proceed from that principle. For aught we can know *à priori*, matter may contain the ſource or ſpring of order originally within itſelf, as well as mind does; and there is no more difficulty in conceiving, that the ſeveral elements, from an internal unknown cauſe, may fall into the moſt exquiſite arrangement, than to conceive that their ideas, in the great, univerſal mind, from a like internal unknown cauſe, fall into that arrangement. The equal poſſibility of both theſe ſuppoſitions is allowed. But by experience we find, (according to Cleanthes), that there is a difference between them. Throw ſeveral pieces of ſteel together, without ſhape or form; they will never arrange themſelves ſo as to compoſe a watch. Stone, and mortar, and wood, without an architect, never erect a houſe. But the ideas in a human mind, we ſee, by an unknown, inexplicable economy, arrange themſelves ſo as to form the plan of a watch or houſe. Experience, therefore, proves, that there is an original principle of order in mind, not in matter. From ſimilar effects we infer ſimilar cauſes. The adjuſtment of means to ends is alike in the univerſe, as in a machine of human contrivance. The cauſes, therefore, muſt be reſembling.

I was from the beginning ſcandalized, I muſt own, with this reſemblance, which is aſſerted, between the Deity and human creatures; and muſt conceive it to imply ſuch a gradation of the Supreme Being as no ſound Theiſt could endure. With your aſſiſtance, therefore, Demea, I ſhall endeavour to defend what you juſtly call the adorable myſteriouſneſs of the

Divine Nature, and ſhall refute this reaſoning of Cleanthes; provided he allows that I have made a fair repreſentation of it.

When Cleanthes had aſſented, Philo, after a ſhort pauſe, proceeded in the following manner.

That all inferences, Cleanthes, concerning fact, are founded on experience; and that all experimental reaſonings are founded on the ſuppoſition, that ſimilar cauſes prove ſimilar effects, and ſimilar effects ſimilar cauſes; I ſhall not, at preſent, much diſpute with you. But obſerve, I entreat you, with what extreme caution all juſt reaſoners proceed in the transferring of experiments to ſimilar caſes. Unleſs the caſes be exactly ſimilar, they repoſe no perfect confidence in applying their paſt obſervation to any particular phenomenon. Every alteration of circumſtances occaſions a doubt concerning the event; and it requires new experiments to prove certainly, that the new circumſtances are of no moment or importance. A change in bulk, ſituation, arrangement, age, diſpoſition of the air, or ſurrounding bodies; any of theſe particulars may be attended with the moſt unexpected conſequences: And unleſs the objects be quite familiar to us, it is the higheſt temerity to expect with aſſurance, after any of theſe changes, an event ſimilar to that which before fell under our obſervation. The ſlow and deliberate ſteps of philoſophers, here, if any where, are diſtinguiſhed from the precipitate march of the vulgar, who, hurried on by the ſmalleſt ſimilitude, are incapable of all diſcernment or conſideration.

But can you think, Cleanthes, that your uſual

phlegm and philoſophy have been preſerved in ſo wide a ſtep as you have taken, when you compared to the univerſe, houſes, ſhips, furniture, machines; and from their ſimilarity in ſome circumſtances inferred a ſimilarity in their cauſes? Thought, deſign, intelligence, ſuch as we diſcover in men and other animals, is no more than one of the ſprings and principles of the univerſe, as well as heat or cold, attraction or repulſion, and a hundred others, which fall under daily obſervation. It is an active cauſe, by which ſome particular parts of nature, we find, produce alterations on other parts. But can a concluſion, with any propriety, be transferred from parts to the whole? Does not the great diſproportion bar all compariſon and inference? From obſerving the growth of a hair, can we learn any thing concerning the generation of a man? Would the manner of a leaf's blowing, even though perfectly known, afford us any inſtruction concerning the vegetation of a tree?

But allowing that we were to take the *operations* of one part of nature upon another for the foundation of our judgment concerning the *origin* of the whole, (which never can be admitted); yet why ſelect ſo minute, ſo weak, ſo bounded a principle as the reaſon and deſign of animals is found to be upon this planet? What peculiar privilege has this little agitation of the brain which we call *thought*, that we muſt thus make it the model of the whole univerſe? Our partiality in our own favor does indeed preſent it on all occaſions; but ſound philoſophy ought carefully to guard againſt ſo natural an illuſion.

So far from admitting, continued Philo, that the operations of a part can afford us any juſt concluſion concerning the origin of the whole, I will not allow any one part to form a rule for another part, if the latter be very remote from the former. Is there any reaſonable ground to conclude, that the inhabitants of other planets poſſeſs thought, intelligence, reaſon, or any thing ſimilar to theſe faculties in men? When nature has ſo extremely diverſified her manner of operation in this ſmall globe; can we imagine, that ſhe inceſſantly copies herſelf throughout ſo immenſe a univerſe? And if thought, as we may well ſuppoſe, be confined merely to this narrow corner, and has even there ſo limited a ſphere of action; with what propriety can we aſſign it for the original cauſe of all things? The narrow views of a peaſant, who makes his domeſtic economy the rule for the government of kingdoms, is in compariſon a pardonable ſophiſm.

But were we ever ſo much aſſured, that a thought and reaſon, reſembling the human, were to be found throughout the whole univerſe, and were its activity elſewhere vaſtly greater and more commanding than it appears in this globe; yet I cannot ſee, why the operations of a world, conſtituted, arranged, adjuſted, can with any propriety be extended to a world which is in its embryo-ſtate, and is advancing towards that conſtitution and arrangement. By obſervation, we know ſomewhat of the economy, action, and nouriſhment of a finiſhed animal; but we muſt transfer with great caution that obſervation to the growth of a fœtus in the womb, and ſtill more to the formation

of an animalcule in the loins of its male parent. Nature, we find, even from our limited experience, poſſeſſes an infinite number of ſprings and principles, which inceſſantly diſcover themſelves on every change of her poſition and ſituation. And what new and unknown principles would actuate her in ſo new and unknown a ſituation as that of the formation of a univerſe, we cannot, without the utmoſt temerity, pretend to determine.

A very ſmall part of this great ſyſtem, during a very ſhort time, is very imperfectly diſcovered to us; and do we thence pronounce deciſively concerning the origin of the whole?

Admirable concluſion! Stone, wood, brick, iron, braſs, have not, at this time, in this minute globe of earth, an order or arrangement without human art and contrivance: therefore the univerſe could not originally attain its order and arrangement without ſomething ſimilar to human art. But is a part of nature, a rule for another part very wide of the former? Is it a rule for the whole? Is a very ſmall part a rule for the univerſe? Is nature in one ſituation a certain rule for nature in another ſituation vaſtly different from the former?

And can you blame me, Cleanthes, if I here imitate the prudent reſerve of Simonides, who according to the noted ſtory, being aſked by Hiero, *What God was?* deſired a day to think of it, and then two days more; and after that manner continually prolonged the term, without ever bringing in his definition or deſcription? Could you even blame me, if I had anſwered at firſt, *that I did not know*, and

was ſenſible that this ſubject lay vaſtly beyond the reach of my faculties? You might cry out ſceptic and rallier as much as you pleaſed: but having found, in ſo many other ſubjects much more familiar, the imperfections and even contradictions of human reaſon, I never ſhould expect any ſucceſs from its feeble conjectures, in a ſubject ſo ſublime, and ſo remote from the ſphere of our obſervation. When two *ſpecies* of objects have always been obſerved to be conjoined together, I can *infer*, by cuſtom, the exiſtence of one wherever I *ſee* the exiſtence of the other: and this I call an argument from experience. But how this argument can have place, where the objects, as in the preſent caſe, are ſingle, individual, without parallel, or ſpecific reſemblance, may be difficult to explain. And will any man tell me with a ſerious countenance, that an orderly univerſe muſt ariſe from ſome thought and art, like the human; becauſe we have experience of it? To aſcertain this reaſoning, it were requiſite, that we had experience of the origin of worlds; and it is not ſufficient, ſurely, that we have ſeen ſhips and cities ariſe from human art and contrivance.

Philo was proceeding in this vehement manner, ſomewhat between jeſt and earneſt, as it appeared to me; when he obſerved ſome ſigns of impatience in Cleanthes, and then immediately ſtopped ſhort. What I had to ſuggeſt, ſaid Cleanthes, is only that you would not abuſe terms, or make uſe of popular expreſſions to ſubvert philoſophical reaſonings. You know, that the vulgar often diſtinguiſh reaſon from experience, even where the queſtion relates only to

matter

matter of fact and exiſtence; though it is found, where that *reaſon* is properly analyzed, that it is nothing but a ſpecies of experience. To prove by experience the origin of the univerſe from mind, is not more contrary to common ſpeech, than to prove the motion of the earth from the ſame principle. And a caviller might raiſe all the ſame objections to the Copernican ſyſtem which you have urged againſt my reaſonings. Have you other earths, might he ſay, which you have ſeen to move? Have.....

Yes! cried Philo, interrupting him, we have other earths. Is not the moon another earth, which we ſee to turn round its centre? Is not Venus another earth, where we obſerve the ſame phenomenon? Are not the revolutions of the ſun alſo a confirmation, from analogy, of the ſame theory? All the planets, are they not earths, which revolve about the ſun? Are not the ſatellites moons, which move round Jupiter and Saturn, and along with theſe primary planets round the ſun? Theſe analogies and reſemblances, with others which I have not mentioned, are the ſole proofs of the Copernican ſyſtem: and to you it belongs to conſider, whether you have any analogies of the ſame kind to ſupport your theory.

In reality, Cleanthes, continued he, the modern ſyſtem of aſtronomy is now ſo much received by all inquirers, and has become ſo eſſential a part even of our earlieſt education, that we are not commonly very ſcrupulous in examining the reaſons upon which it is founded. It is now become a matter of mere curioſity to ſtudy the firſt writers on that ſubject, who had the full force of prejudice to encounter, and

were obliged to turn their arguments on every ſide, in order to render them popular and convincing. But if we peruſe Galilæo's famous Dialogues concerning the ſyſtem of the world, we ſhall find, that that great genius, one of the ſublimeſt that ever exiſted, firſt bent all his endeavours to prove, that there was no foundation for the diſtinction commonly made between elementary and celeſtial ſubſtances. Theſe ſchools, proceeding from the illuſions of ſenſe, had carried this diſtinction very far; and had eſtabliſhed the latter ſubſtances to be ingenerable, incorruptible, unalterable, impaſſible; and had aſſigned all the oppoſite qualities to the former. But Galilæo, beginning with the moon, proved its ſimilarity in every particular to the earth; its convex figure, its natural darkneſs when not illuminated, its denſity, its diſtinction into ſolid and liquid, the variations of its phaſes, the mutual illuminations of the earth and moon, their mutual eclipſes, the inequalities of the lunar ſurface, &c. After many inſtances of this kind, with regard to all the planets, men plainly ſaw that theſe bodies became proper objects of experience; and that the ſimilarity of their nature enabled us to extend the ſame arguments and phenomena from one to the other.

In this cautious proceeding of the aſtronomers, you may read your own condemnation, Cleanthes; or rather may ſee, that the ſubject in which you are engaged exceeds all human reaſon and inquiry. Can you pretend to ſhow any ſuch ſimilarity between the fabric of a houſe and the generation of a univerſe? Have you ever ſeen Nature in any ſuch ſituation

as reſembles the firſt arrangement of the elements? Have worlds ever been formed under your eye? and have you had leiſure to obſerve the whole progreſs of the phenomenon, from the firſt appearance of order to its final conſummation? If you have, then cite your experience, and deliver your theory.

PART III.

HOW the moſt abſurd argument, replied Cleanthes, in the hands of a man of ingenuity and invention, may acquire an air of probability! Are you not aware, Philo, that it became neceſſary for Copernicus and his firſt diſciples to prove the ſimilarity of the terreſtrial and celeſtial matter; becauſe ſeveral philoſophers, blinded by old ſyſtems, and ſupported by ſome ſenſible appearances, had denied this ſimilarity? but that it is by no means neceſſary, that Theiſts ſhould prove the ſimilarity of the works of Nature to thoſe of Art; becauſe this ſimilarity is ſelf-evident and undeniable? The ſame matter, a like form: what more is requiſite to ſhow an analogy between their cauſes, and to aſcertain the origin of all things from a divine purpoſe and intention? Your objections, I muſt freely tell you, are no better than the abſtruſe cavils of thoſe philoſophers who denied motion; and ought to be refuted in the ſame manner, by illuſtrations, examples, and inſtances, rather than by ſerious argument and philoſophy.

Suppoſe, therefore, that an articulate voice were heard in the clouds, much louder and more melodious

than any which human art could ever reach: Suppoſe, that this voice were extended in the ſame inſtant over all nations, and ſpoke to each nation in its own language and dialect: Suppoſe, that the words delivered not only contain a juſt ſenſe and meaning, but convey ſome inſtruction altogether worthy of a benevolent Being, ſuperior to mankind: Could you poſſibly heſitate a moment concerning the cauſe of this voice? and muſt you not inſtantly aſcribe it to ſome deſign or purpoſe? Yet I cannot ſee but all the ſame objections (if they merit that appellation) which lie againſt the ſyſtem of Theiſm, may alſo be produced againſt this inference.

Might you not ſay, that all concluſions concerning fact were founded on experience: that when we hear an articulate voice in the dark, and thence infer a man, it is only the reſemblance of the effects which leads us to conclude that there is a like reſemblance in the cauſe: but that this extraordinary voice, by its loudneſs, extent, and flexibility to all languages, bears ſo little analogy to any human voice, that we have no reaſon to ſuppoſe any analogy in their cauſes: and conſequently, that a rational, wiſe, coherent ſpeech proceeded, you knew not whence, from ſome accidental whiſtling of the winds, not from any divine reaſon or intelligence? You ſee clearly your own objections in theſe cavils; and I hope too, you ſee clearly, that they cannot poſſibly have more force in the one caſe than in the other.

But to bring the caſe ſtill nearer the preſent one of the univerſe, I ſhall make two ſuppoſitions, which imply not any abſurdity or impoſſibility. Suppoſe,

that there is a natural, univerſal, invariable language, common to every individual of human race; and that books are natural productions, which perpetuate themſelves in the ſame manner with animals and vegetables, by deſcent and propagation. Several expreſſions of our paſſions contain a univerſal language: all brute animals have a natural ſpeech, which, however limited, is very intelligible to their own ſpecies. And as there are infinitely fewer parts and leſs contrivance in the fineſt compoſition of eloquence, than in the coarſeſt organized body, the propagation of an Iliad or Æneid is an eaſier ſuppoſition than that of any plant or animal.

Suppoſe, therefore, that you enter into your library, thus peopled by natural volumes containing the moſt refined reaſon and moſt exquiſite beauty; could you poſſibly open one of them, and doubt, that its original cauſe bore the ſtrongeſt analogy to mind and intelligence? When it reaſons and diſcourſes; when it expoſtulates, argues, and enforces its views and topics; when it applies ſometimes to the pure intellect, ſometimes to the affections; when it collects, diſpoſes, and adorns every conſideration ſuited to the ſubject; could you perſiſt in aſſerting, that all this, at the bottom, had really no meaning; and that the firſt formation of this volume in the loins of its original parent proceeded not from thought and deſign? Your obſtinacy, I know, reaches not that degree of firmneſs: even your ſceptical play and wantonneſs would be abaſhed at ſo glaring an abſurdity.

But if there be any difference, Philo, between this ſuppoſed caſe and the real one of the univerſe,

it is all to the advantage of the latter. The anatomy of an animal affords many ſtronger inſtances of deſign than the peruſal of Livy or Tacitus: and any objection which you ſtart in the former caſe, by carrying me back to ſo unuſual and extraordinary a ſcene as the firſt formation of worlds, the ſame objection had place on the ſuppoſition of our vegetating library. Chuſe, then, your party, Philo, without ambiguity or evaſion: aſſert either that a rational volume is no proof of a rational cauſe, or admit of a ſimilar cauſe to all the works of nature.

Let me here obſerve too, continued Cleanthes, that this religious argument, inſtead of being weakened by that ſcepticiſm ſo much affected by you, rather acquires force from it, and becomes more firm and undiſputed. To exclude all argument or reaſoning of every kind, is either affectation or madneſs. The declared profeſſion of every reaſonable ſceptic is only to reject abſtruſe, remote, and refined arguments; to adhere to common ſenſe and the plain inſtincts of nature; and to aſſent, wherever any reaſons ſtrike him with ſo full a force, that he cannot, without the greateſt violence, prevent it. Now the arguments for Natural Religion are plainly of this kind; and nothing but the moſt perverſe, obſtinate metaphyſics can reject them. Conſider, anatomize the eye; ſurvey its ſtructure and contrivance; and tell me, from your own feeling, if the idea of a contriver does not immediately flow in upon you with a force like that of ſenſation. The moſt obvious concluſion, ſurely, is in favor of deſign; and it requires time, reflection, and ſtudy, to ſummon up

thoſe frivolous, though abſtruſe objections, which can ſupport Infidelity. Who can behold the male and female of each ſpecies, the correſpondence of their parts and inſtincts, their paſſions, and whole courſe of life before and after generation, but muſt be ſenſible, that the propagation of the ſpecies is intended by Nature? Millions and millions of ſuch inſtances preſent themſelves through every part of the univerſe; and no language can convey a more intelligible, irreſiſtible meaning, than the curious adjuſtment of final cauſes. To what degree, therefore, of blind dogmatiſm muſt one have attained, to reject ſuch natural and ſuch convincing arguments?

Some beauties in writing we may meet with, which ſeem contrary to rules, and which gain the affections, and animate the imagination, in oppoſition to all the precepts of criticiſm, and to the authority of the eſtabliſhed maſters of art. And if the argument for Theiſm be, as you pretend, contradictory to the principles of logic; its univerſal, its irreſiſtible influence proves clearly, that there may be arguments of a like irregular nature. Whatever cavils may be urged, an orderly world, as well as a coherent, articulate ſpeech, will ſtill be received as an inconteſtible proof of deſign and intention.

It ſometimes happens, I own, that the religious arguments have not their due influence on an ignorant ſavage and barbarian; not becauſe they are obſcure and difficult, but becauſe he never aſks himſelf any queſtion with regard to them. Whence ariſes the curious ſtructure of an animal? From the copulation of its parents. And theſe whence? From

their parents. A few removes ſet the objects at ſuch a diſtance, that to him they are loſt in darkneſs and confuſion; nor is he actuated by any curioſity to trace them farther. But this is neither dogmatiſm nor ſcepticiſm, but ſtupidity; a ſtate of mind very different from your ſifting, inquiſitive diſpoſition, my ingenious friend. You can trace cauſes from effects; you can compare the moſt diſtant and remote objects; and your greateſt errors proceed not from barrenneſs of thought and invention, but from too luxuriant a fertility, which ſuppreſſes your natural good ſenſe, by a profuſion of unneceſſary ſcruples and objections.

Here I could obſerve, Hermippus, that Philo was a little embarraſſed and confounded: but while he heſitated in delivering an anſwer, luckily for him Demea broke in upon the diſcourſe, and ſaved his countenance.

Your inſtance, Cleanthes, ſaid he, drawn from books and language, being familiar, has, I confeſs, ſo much more force on that account: but is there not ſome danger too in this very circumſtance; and may it not render us preſumptuous, by making us imagine we comprehend the Deity, and have ſome adequate idea of his nature and attributes? When I read a volume, I enter into the mind and intention of the author: I become him, in a manner, for the inſtant; and have an immediate feeling and conception of thoſe ideas which revolved in his imagination while employed in that compoſition. But ſo near an approach we never ſurely can make to the Deity. His ways are not our ways. His attributes are perfect,

but incomprehenſible. And this volume of Nature contains a great and inexplicable riddle, more than any intelligible diſcourſe or reaſoning.

The ancient Platoniſts, you know, were the moſt religious and devout of all the Pagan philoſophers: yet many of them, particularly Plotinus, expreſsly declare, that intellect or underſtanding is not to be aſcribed to the Deity; and that our moſt perfect worſhip of him conſiſts, not in acts of veneration, reverence, gratitude, or love; but in a certain myſterious ſelf-annihilation, or total extinction of all our faculties. Theſe ideas are, perhaps, too far ſtretched; but ſtill it muſt be acknowledged, that, by repreſenting the Deity as ſo intelligible and comprehenſible, and ſo ſimilar to a human mind, we are guilty of the groſſeſt and moſt narrow partiality, and make ourſelves the model of the whole univerſe.

All the *ſentiments* of the human mind, gratitude, reſentment, love, friendſhip, approbation, blame, pity, emulation, envy, have a plain reference to the ſtate and ſituation of man, and are calculated for preſerving the exiſtence and promoting the activity of ſuch a being in ſuch circumſtances. It ſeems therefore unreaſonable to transfer ſuch ſentiments to a ſupreme exiſtence, or to ſuppoſe him actuated by them; and the phenomena, beſides, of the univerſe will not ſupport us in ſuch a theory. All our *ideas* derived from the ſenſes are confeſſedly falſe and illuſive; and cannot, therefore, be ſuppoſed to have place in a ſupreme intelligence: And as the ideas of internal ſentiment, added to thoſe of the external ſenſes,

compoſe the whole furniture of human underſtanding, we may conclude, that none of the *materials* of thought are in any reſpect ſimilar in the human and in the divine intelligence. Now as to the *manner* of thinking; how can we make any compariſon between them, or ſuppoſe them any wiſe reſembling? Our thought is fluctuating, uncertain, fleeting, ſucceſſive, and compounded; and were we to remove theſe circumſtances, we abſolutely annihilate its eſſence, and it would in ſuch a caſe be an abuſe of terms to apply to it the name of thought or reaſon. At leaſt, if it appear more pious and reſpectful (as it really is) ſtill to retain theſe terms, when we mention the Supreme Being; we ought to acknowledge, that their meaning, in that caſe, is totally incomprehenſible; and that the infirmities of our nature do not permit us to reach any ideas which in the leaſt correſpond to the ineffable ſublimity of the divine attributes.

PART IV.

IT ſeems ſtrange to me, ſaid Cleanthes, that you, Demea, who are ſo ſincere in the cauſe of religion, ſhould ſtill maintain the myſterious, incomprehenſible nature of the Deity, and ſhould inſiſt ſo ſtrenuouſly that he has no manner of likeneſs or reſemblance to human creatures. The Deity, I can readily allow, poſſeſſes many powers and attributes, of which we can have no comprehenſion: But if our ideas, ſo far as they go, be not juſt, and adequate, and correſpondent to his real nature, I know not what there is in this ſubject worth inſiſting on. Is the name, without any meaning, of ſuch mighty importance? Or how do you, Myſtics, who maintain the abſolute incomprehenſibility of the Deity, differ from Sceptics or Atheiſts, who aſſert, that the firſt cauſe of all is unknown and unintelligible? Their temerity muſt be very great, if, after rejecting the production by a mind; I mean, a mind reſembling the human (for I know of no other) they pretend to aſſign, with certainty, any other ſpecific intelligible cauſe: and their conſcience muſt be very ſcrupulous indeed, if they refuſe to call the univerſal, unknown cauſe a God or Deity, and to beſtow on him as many ſublime eulogies and unmeaning epithets as you ſhall pleaſe to require of them.

Who could imagine, replied Demea, that Cleanthes, the calm, philoſophical Cleanthes, would attempt to refute his antagoniſts, by affixing a nickname

to them; and, like the common bigots and inquiſitors of the age, have recourſe to invective and declamation, inſtead of reaſoning? Or does he not perceive, that theſe topics are eaſily retorted, and that Anthropomorphite is an appellation as invidious, and implies as dangerous conſequences, as the epithet of Myſtic, with which he has honored us? In reality, Cleanthes, conſider what it is you aſſert when you repreſent the Deity as ſimilar to a human mind and underſtanding. What is the ſoul of man? A compoſition of various faculties, paſſions, ſentiments, ideas; united, indeed into one ſelf or perſon, but ſtill diſtinct from each other. When it reaſons, the ideas, which are the parts of its diſcourſe, arrange themſelves in a certain form or order; which is not preſerved entire for a moment, but immediately gives place to another arrangement. New opinions, new paſſions, new affections, new feelings ariſe, which continually diverſify the mental ſcene, and produce in it the greateſt variety and moſt rapid ſucceſſion imaginable. How is this compatible with that perfect immutability and ſimplicity which all true Theiſts aſcribe to the Deity? By the ſame act, ſay they, he ſees paſt, preſent, and future: His love and hatred, his mercy and juſtice, are one individual operation: He is entire in every point of ſpace; and complete in every inſtant of duration. No ſucceſſion, no change, no acquiſition, no diminution. What he is implies not in it any ſhadow of diſtinction or diverſity. And what he is, this moment, he ever has been, and ever will be, without any new judgment, ſentiment, or operation. He ſtands fixed in one ſimple, perfect ſtate: nor can you ever ſay, with any pro-

priety, that this act of his is different from that other; or that this judgment or idea has been lately formed, and will give place, by ſucceſſion, to any different judgment or idea.

I can readily allow, ſaid Cleanthes, that thoſe who maintain the perfect ſimplicity of the Supreme Being, to the extent in which you have explained it, are complete Myſtics, and chargeable with all the conſequences which I have drawn from their opinion. They are, in a word, Atheiſts, without knowing it. For though it be allowed, that the Deity poſſeſſes attributes of which we have no comprehenſion; yet ought we never to aſcribe to him any attributes which are abſolutely incompatible with that intelligent nature eſſential to him. A mind, whoſe acts and ſentiments and ideas are not diſtinct and ſucceſſive; one, that is wholly ſimple, and totally immutable; is a mind, which has no thought, no reaſon, no will, no ſentiment, no love, no hatred; or in a word, is no mind at all. It is an abuſe of terms to give it that appellation; and we may as well ſpeak of limited extenſion without figure, or of number without compoſition. Pray conſider, ſaid Philo, whom you are at preſent inveighing againſt. You are honoring with the appellation of *Atheiſt* all the ſound, orthodox divines, almoſt, who have treated of this ſubject; and you will at laſt be, yourſelf, ſound, according to your reckoning, the only ſound Theiſt in the world. But if idolaters be Atheiſts, as, I think, may juſtly be aſſerted, and Chriſtian Theologians the ſame; what becomes of the argument, ſo much celebrated, derived from the univerſal conſent of mankind?

But becauſe I know you are not much ſwayed by names and authorities, I ſhall endeavour to ſhow you, a little more diſtinctly, the inconveniences of that Anthropomorphiſm which you have embraced; and ſhall prove, that there is no ground to ſuppoſe a plan of the world to be formed in the divine mind, conſiſting of diſtinct ideas, differently arranged; in the ſame manner as an architect forms in his head the plan of a houſe which he intends to execute.

It is not eaſy, I own, to ſee what is gained by this ſuppoſition, whether we judge of the matter by *Reaſon* or by *Experience*. We are ſtill obliged to mount higher, in order to find the cauſe of this cauſe, which you had aſſigned as ſatisfactory and concluſive.

If *Reaſon* (I mean abſtract reaſon, derived from inquiries *à priori*) be not alike mute with regard to all queſtions concerning cauſe and effect; this ſentence at leaſt it will venture to pronounce, That a mental world, or univerſe of ideas, requires a cauſe as much as does a material world, or univerſe of objects; and, if ſimilar in its arrangement, muſt require a ſimilar cauſe. For what is there in this ſubject which ſhould occaſion a different concluſion or inference? In an abſtract view, they are entirely alike; and no difficulty attends the one ſuppoſition which is not common to both of them.

Again, when we will needs force *Experience* to pronounce ſome ſentence, even on theſe ſubjects which lie beyond her ſphere, neither can ſhe perceive any material difference in this particular between theſe two kinds of worlds; but finds them to be governed by ſimilar principles, and to depend upon

an equal variety of cauſes in their operations: We have ſpecimens in miniature of both of them. Our own mind reſembles the one: A vegetable or animal body the other. Let Experience, therefore, judge from theſe ſamples. Nothing ſeems more delicate, with regard to its cauſes, than thought; and as theſe cauſes never operate in two perſons after the ſame manner, ſo we never find two perſons who think exactly alike. Nor indeed does the ſame perſon think exactly alike at any two different periods of time. A difference of age, of the diſpoſition of his body, of weather, of food, of company, of books, of paſſions; any of theſe particulars, or others more minute, are ſufficient to alter the curious machinery of thought, and communicate to it very different movements and operations. As far as we can judge, vegetables and animal bodies are not more delicate in their motions, nor depend upon a greater variety or more curious adjuſtment of ſprings and principles.

How therefore ſhall we ſatisfy ourſelves concerning the cauſe of that Being whom you ſuppoſe the Author of Nature, or, according to your ſyſtem of Anthropomorphiſm, the ideal world, into which you trace the material? Have we not the ſame reaſon to trace that ideal world into another ideal world, or new intelligent principle? But if we ſtop, and go no farther; why go ſo far? Why not ſtop at the material world? How can we ſatisfy ourſelves without going on *in infinitum?* And after all, what ſatisfaction is there in that infinite progreſſion? Let us remember the ſtory of the Indian philoſopher and his elephant. It was never more applicable than to the preſent ſubject.

If the material world reſts upon a ſimilar ideal world, this ideal world muſt reſt upon ſome other; and ſo on without end. It were better, therefore, never to look beyond the preſent material world. By ſuppoſing it to contain the principle of its order within itſelf, we really aſſert it to be God; and the ſooner we arrive at that divine Being, ſo much the better. When you go one ſtep beyond the mundane ſyſtem, you only excite an inquiſitive humor, which it is impoſſible ever to ſatisfy.

To ſay, that the different ideas, which compoſe the reaſon of the Supreme Being, fall into order, of themſelves, and by their own nature, is really to talk without any preciſe meaning. If it has a meaning, I would fain know, why is it not as good ſenſe to ſay, that the parts of the material world would fall into order, of themſelves, and by their own nature. Can the one opinion be intelligible, while the other is not ſo?

We have, indeed, experience of ideas, which fall into order, of themſelves, and without any *known* cauſe: But, I am ſure, we have a much larger experience of matter, which does the ſame; as in all inſtances of generation and vegetation, where the accurate analyſis of the cauſe exceeds all human comprehenſion. We have alſo experience of particular ſyſtems of thought and of matter, which have no order: of the firſt, in madneſs; of the ſecond, in corruption. Why then ſhould we think, that order is more eſſential to one than the other? And if it requires a cauſe in both, what do we gain by your ſyſtem, in tracing the univerſe of objects into a ſimilar

univerſe

univerſe of ideas? The firſt ſtep which we make leads us on for ever. It were, therefore, wiſe in us, to limit all our inquiries to the preſent world, without looking farther. No ſatisfaction can ever be attained by theſe ſpeculations, which ſo far exceed the narrow bounds of human underſtanding.

It was uſual with the Peripatetics, you know, Cleanthes, when the cauſe of any phenomenon was demanded to have recourſe to their *faculties* or *occult qualities*; and to ſay, for inſtance, that bread nouriſhed by its nutritive faculty, and ſenna purged by its purgative: But it has been diſcovered, that this ſubterfuge was nothing but the diſguiſe of ignorance; and that theſe philoſophers, though leſs ingenuous, really ſaid the ſame thing with the ſceptics or the vulgar, who fairly confeſſed, that they knew not the cauſe of theſe phenomena. In like manner, when it is aſked, what cauſe produces order in the ideas of the Supreme Being? can any other reaſon be aſſigned by you, Anthropomorphites, than that it is a *rational* faculty, and that ſuch is the nature of the Deity? But why a ſimilar anſwer will not be equally ſatisfactory in accounting for the order of the world, without having recourſe to any ſuch intelligent creator as you inſiſt on, may be difficult to determine. It is only to ſay, that *ſuch* is the nature of material objects, and that they are all originally poſſeſſed of a *faculty* of order and proportion. Theſe are only more learned and elaborate ways of confeſſing our ignorance; nor has the one hypotheſis any real advantage above the other, except in its greater conformity to vulgar prejudices.

You have displayed this argument with great emphasis, replied Cleanthes: You seem not sensible how easy it is to answer it. Even in common life, if I assign a cause for any event; is it any objection, Philo, that I cannot assign the cause of that cause, and answer every new question which may incessantly be started? And what philosophers could possibly submit to so rigid a rule? philosophers, who confess ultimate causes to be totally unknown; and are sensible, that the most refined principles, into which they trace the phenomena, are still to them as inexplicable as these phenomena themselves are to the vulgar. The order and arrangement of nature, the curious adjustment of final causes, the plain use and intention of every part and organ; all these bespeak in the clearest language an intelligent cause or author. The heavens and the earth join in the same testimony: The whole chorus of Nature raises one hymn to the praises of its Creator: You alone, or almost alone, disturb this general harmony. You start abstruse doubts, cavils, and objections: You ask me, what is the cause of this cause? I know not; I care not; that concerns not me. I have found a Deity; and here I stop my inquiry. Let those go farther who are wiser or more enterprising.

I pretend to be neither, replied Philo: and for that very reason, I should never perhaps have attempted to go so far; especially when I am sensible, that I must at last be contented to sit down with the same answer, which, without farther trouble, might have satisfied me from the beginning. If I am still to remain in utter ignorance of causes, and can

abſolutely give an explication of nothing, I ſhall never eſteem it any advantage to ſhove off for a moment a difficulty, which, you acknowledge, muſt immediately, in its full force, recur upon me. Naturaliſts indeed very juſtly explain particular effects by more general cauſes; though theſe general cauſes themſelves ſhould remain in the end totally inexplicable: but they never ſurely thought it ſatisfactory to explain a particular effect by a particular cauſe, which was no more to be accounted for than the effect itſelf. An ideal ſyſtem, arranged of itſelf, without a precedent deſign, is not a whit more explicable than a material one, which attains its order in a like manner; nor is there any more difficulty in the latter ſuppoſition than in the former.

PART V.

But to ſhow you ſtill more inconveniences, continued Philo, in your Anthropomorphiſm; pleaſe to take a new ſurvey of your principles. *Like effects prove like cauſes.* This is the experimental argument; and this, you ſay too, is the ſole theological argument. Now it is certain, that the liker the effects are which are ſeen, and the liker the cauſes which are inferred, the ſtronger is the argument. Every departure on either ſide diminiſhes the probability, and renders the experiment leſs concluſive. You cannot doubt of the principle: neither ought you to reject its conſequences.

All the new diſcoveries in aſtronomy, which prove the immenſe grandeur and magnificence of the works of Nature, are ſo many additional arguments for a Deity, according to the true ſyſtem of Theiſm: but, according to your hypotheſis of experimental Theiſm, they become ſo many objections, by removing the effect ſtill farther from all reſemblance to the effects of human art and contrivance. For if Lucretius [1], even following the old ſyſtem of the world, could exclaim,

> Quis regere immenſi ſummam, quis habere profundi
> Indu manu validas potis eſt moderanter habenas?
> Quis pariter cœlos omneis convertere? et omneis
> Ignibus ætheriis terras ſuffire feraci?
> Omnibus inque locis eſſe omni tempore præſto?

[1] Lib. ii. 1094.

If Tully [a] eſteemed this reaſoning ſo natural as to put it into the mouth of his Epicurean, *Quibus enim oculis animi intueri potuit veſter Plato fabricam illam tanti operis, qua conſtrui a Deo, atque ædificari mundum facit? quæ molitio? quæ ferramenta? qui vectes? quæ machinæ? qui miniſtri tanti muneris fuerunt? quemadmodum autem obedire et parere voluntati architecti aer, ignis, aqua, terra potuerunt?* If this argument, I ſay, had any force in former ages, how much greater muſt it have at preſent, when the bounds of Nature are ſo infinitely enlarged, and ſuch a magnificent ſcene is opened to us? It is ſtill more unreaſonable to form our idea of ſo unlimited a cauſe from our experience of the narrow productions of human deſign and invention.

The diſcoveries by microſcopes, as they open a new univerſe in miniature, are ſtill objections, according to you; arguments, according to me. The farther we puſh our reſearches of this kind, we are ſtill led to infer the univerſal cauſe of all to be vaſtly different from mankind, or from any object of human experience and obſervation.

And what ſay you to the diſcoveries in anatomy, chemiſtry, botany? — Theſe ſurely are no objections, replied Cleanthes: they only diſcover new inſtances of art and contrivance. It is ſtill the image of mind reflected on us from innumerable objects. Add a mind *like the human*, ſaid Philo. I know of no other, replied Cleanthes. And the liker the better, inſiſted Philo. To be ſure, ſaid Cleanthes.

[a] De nat. Deor. lib. i. c. 8.

Now, Cleanthes, ſaid Philo, with an air of alacrity and triumph, mark the conſequences. *Firſt*, By this method of reaſoning, you renounce all claim to infinity in any of the attributes of the Deity. For as the cauſe ought only to be proportioned to the effect; and the effect, ſo far as it falls under our cognizance, is not infinite; what pretenſions have we, upon your ſuppoſitions, to aſcribe that attribute to the divine Being? You will ſtill inſiſt, that, by removing him ſo much from all ſimilarity to human creatures, we give into the moſt arbitrary hypotheſis, and at the ſame time weaken all proofs of his exiſtence.

Secondly, You have no reaſon, on your theory, for aſcribing perfection to the Deity, even in his finite capacity; or for ſuppoſing him free from every error, miſtake, or incoherence, in his undertakings. There are many inexplicable difficulties in the works of Nature, which, if we allow a perfect author to be proved *à priori*, are eaſily ſolved, and become only ſeeming difficulties, from the narrow capacity of man, who cannot trace infinite relations. But according to your method of reaſoning, theſe difficulties become all real; and perhaps will be inſiſted on, as new inſtances of likeneſs to human art and contrivance. At leaſt, you muſt acknowledge, that it is impoſſible for us to tell, from our limited views, whether this ſyſtem contains any great faults, or deſerves any conſiderable praiſe, if compared to other poſſible, and even real ſyſtems. Could a peaſant, if the Æneid were read to him, pronounce that poem to be abſolutely faultleſs, or even aſſign to its proper rank among the productions of human wit; he, who had never ſeen any other production?

But were this world ever ſo perfect a production, it muſt ſtill remain uncertain, whether all the excellencies of the work can juſtly be aſcribed to the workman. If we ſurvey a ſhip, what an exalted idea muſt we form of the ingenuity of the carpenter who framed ſo complicated, uſeful, and beautiful a machine? And what ſurprife muſt we feel, when we find him a ſtupid mechanic, who imitated others, and copied an art, which, through a long ſucceſſion of ages, after multiplied trials, miſtakes, corrections deliberations, and controverſies, had been gradually improving? Many worlds might have been botched and bungled, throughout an eternity, ere this ſyſtem was ſtruck out; much labor loſt; many fruitleſs trials made, and a ſlow, but continued, improvement carried on during infinite ages in the art of world-making. In ſuch ſubjects, who can determine where the truth, nay, who can conjecture, where the probability, lies; amidſt a great number of hypotheſis which may be propoſed, and a ſtill greater number which may be imagined?

And what ſhadow of an argument, continued Philo, can you produce, from your hypotheſis, to prove the unity of the Deity? A great number of men join in building a houſe or ſhip, in rearing a city, in framing a commonwealth: why may not ſeveral deities combine in contriving and framing a world? This is only ſo much greater ſimilarity to human affairs. By ſharing the work among ſeveral, we may ſo much farther limit the attributes of each, and get rid of that extenſive power and knowledge, which muſt be ſuppoſed in one deity, and which,

according to you, can only ſerve to weaken the proof of his exiſtence. And if ſuch fooliſh, ſuch vicious creatures as man can yet often unite in framing and executing one plan; how much more thoſe deities or demons, whom we may ſuppoſe ſeveral degrees more perfect?

To multiply cauſes without neceſſity, is indeed contrary to true philoſophy: but this principle applies not to the preſent caſe. Were one deity antecedently proved by your theory, who were poſſeſſed of every attribute requiſite to the production of the univerſe; it would be needleſs, I own, (though not abſurd), to ſuppoſe any other deity exiſtent. But while it is ſtill a queſtion, Whether all theſe attributes are united in one ſubject, or diſperſed among ſeveral independent beings; by what phenomena in nature can we pretend to decide the controverſy? Where we ſee a body raiſed in a ſcale, we are ſure that there is in the oppoſite ſcale, however concealed from ſight, ſome counterpoiſing weight equal to it: but it is ſtill allowed to doubt, whether that weight be an aggregate of ſeveral diſtinct bodies, or one uniform united maſs. And if the weight requiſite very much exceeds any thing which we have ever ſeen conjoined in any ſingle body, the former ſuppoſition becomes ſtill more probable and natural. An intelligent being of ſuch vaſt power and capacity as is neceſſary to produce the univerſe, or, to ſpeak in the language of ancient philoſophy, ſo prodigious an animal exceeds all analogy, and even comprehenſion.

But farther, Cleanthes: Men are mortal, and renew their ſpecies by generation; and this is common

to all living creatures. The two great ſexes of male and female ſays Milton, animate the world. Why muſt this circumſtance, ſo univerſal, ſo eſſential, be excluded from thoſe numerous and limited deities? Behold, then, the theogony of ancient times brought back upon us.

And why not become a perfect Anthropomorphite? Why not aſſert the deity or deities to be corporeal, and to have eyes, a noſe, mouth, ears, &c.? Epicurus maintained, that no man had ever ſeen reaſon but in a human figure; therefore the gods muſt have a human figure. And this argument, which is deſervedly ſo much ridiculed by Cicero, becomes, according to you, ſolid and philoſophical.

In a word, Cleanthes, a man, who follows your hypotheſis, is able, perhaps, to aſſert, or conjecture, that the univerſe, ſometime, aroſe from ſomething like deſign: but beyond that poſition he cannot aſcertain one ſingle circumſtance; and is left afterwards to fix every point of his theology, by the utmoſt licence of fancy and hypotheſis. This world, for aught he knows, is very faulty and imperfect, compared to a ſuperior ſtandard; and was only the firſt rude eſſay of ſome infant deity, who afterwards abandoned it, aſhamed of his lame performance; it is the work only of ſome dependent, inferior deity; and is the object of deriſion to his ſuperiors: it is the production of old age and dotage in ſome ſuperannuated deity: and ever ſince his death, has run on at adventures, from the firſt impulſe and active force which it received from him. You juſtly give ſigns of horror, Demea, at theſe ſtrange ſuppoſitions;

but theſe, and a thouſand more of the ſame kind, are Cleanthes's ſuppoſitions, not mine. From the moment the attributes of the Deity are ſuppoſed finite, all theſe have place. And I cannot, for my part, think, that ſo wild and unſettled a ſyſtem of theology is, in any reſpect, preferable to none at all.

Theſe ſuppoſitions I abſolutely diſown, cried Cleanthes: they ſtrike me, however, with no horror; eſpecially when propoſed in that rambling way in which they drop from you. On the contrary, they give me pleaſure, when I ſee that, by the utmoſt indulgence of your imagination, you never get rid of the hypotheſis of deſign in the univerſe; but are obliged at every turn to have recourſe to it. To this conceſſion I adhere ſteadily; and this I regard as a ſufficient foundation for religion.

PART VI.

IT muſt be a ſlight fabric, indeed, ſaid Demea, which can be erected on ſo tottering a foundation. While we are uncertain, whether there is one deity or many; whether deity or deities, to whom we owe our exiſtence, be perfect or imperfect, ſubordinate or ſupreme, dead or alive, what truſt or confidence can we repoſe in them? What devotion or worſhip addreſs to them? What veneration or obedience pay them? To all the purpoſes of life, the theory of religion becomes altogether uſeleſs: and even with regard to ſpeculative conſequences, its uncertainty, according to you, muſt render it totally precarious and unſatisfactory.

To render it ſtill more unſatisfactory, ſaid Philo, there occurs to me another hypotheſis, which muſt acquire an air of probability from the method of reaſoning ſo much inſiſted on by Cleanthes. That like effects ariſe from like cauſes: this principle he ſuppoſes the foundation of all religion. But there is another principle of the ſame kind, no leſs certain, and derived from the ſame ſource of experience; That where ſeveral known circumſtances are obſerved to be ſimilar, the unknown will alſo be found ſimilar. Thus, if we ſee the limbs of a human body, we conclude, that it is alſo attended with a human head, though hid from us. Thus, if we ſee, through a chink in a wall, a ſmall part of the ſun, we conclude, that, were the wall removed, we ſhould ſee

the whole body. In ſhort, this method of reaſoning is ſo obvious and familiar, that no ſcruple can ever be made with regard to its ſolidity.

Now if we ſurvey the univerſe, ſo far as it falls under our knowledge, it bears a great reſemblance to an animal or organized body, and ſeems actuated with a like principle of life and motion. A continual circulation of matter in it produces no diſorder; a continual waſte in every part is inceſſantly repaired: the cloſeſt ſympathy is perceived throughout the entire ſyſtem: and each part or member, in performing its proper offices, operates both to its own preſervation and to that of the whole. The world, therefore, I infer, is an animal; and the Deity is the Soul of the world, actuating it, and actuated by it.

You have too much learning, Cleanthes, to be at all ſurpriſed at this opinion, which, you know, was maintained by almoſt all the Theiſts of antiquity, and chiefly prevails in their diſcourſes and reaſonings. For though ſometimes the ancient philoſophers reaſon from final cauſes, as if they thought the world the workmanſhip of God; yet it appears rather their favorite notion to conſider it as his body, whoſe organization renders it ſubſervient to him. And it muſt be confeſſed, that as the univerſe reſembles more a human body than it does the works of human art and contrivance; if our limited analogy could ever, with any propriety, be extended to the whole of nature, the inference ſeems juſter in favor of the ancient than the modern theory.

There are many other advantages, too, in the former theory, which recommended it to the ancient

Theologians. Nothing more repugnant to all their notions, becauſe nothing more repugnant to common experience, than mind without body; a mere ſpiritual ſubſtance, which fell not under their ſenſes nor comprehenſion, and of which they had not obſerved one ſingle inſtance throughout all nature. Mind and body they knew, becauſe they felt both, an order, arrangement, organization, or internal machinery, in both, they likewiſe knew, after the ſame manner: and it could not but ſeem reaſonable to transfer this experience to the univerſe: and to ſuppoſe the divine mind and body to be alſo co-eval, and to have both of them, order and arrangement, naturally inherent in them, and inſeparable from them.

Here, therefore, is a new ſpecies of *Anthropomorphiſm*, Cleanthes, on which you may deliberate; and a theory which ſeems not liable to any conſiderable difficulties. You are too much ſuperior, ſurely, to *ſyſtematical prejudices*, to find any more difficulty in ſuppoſing an animal body to be, originally, of itſelf, or from unknown cauſes, poſſeſſed of order and organization, than in ſuppoſing a ſimilar order to belong to mind. But the *vulgar prejudice*, that body and mind ought always to accompany each other, ought not, one ſhould think, to be entirely neglected; ſince it is founded on *vulgar experience*, the only guide which you profeſs to follow in all theſe theological inquiries. And if you aſſert, that our limited experience is an unequal ſtandard, by which to judge of the unlimited extent of nature; you entirely abandon your own hypotheſis, and muſt thenceforward adopt our Myſticiſm, as you

call it, and admit of the abſolute incomprehenſibility of the Divine Nature.

This theory, I own, replied Cleanthes, has never before occurred to me, though a pretty natural one; and I cannot readily, upon ſo ſhort an examination and reflection, deliver any opinion with regard to it. You are very ſcrupulous, indeed, ſaid Philo: were I to examine any ſyſtem of yours, I ſhould not have acted with half that caution and reſerve, in ſtarting objections and difficulties to it. However, if any thing occur to you, you will oblige us by propoſing it.

Why then, replied Cleanthes, it ſeems to me, that though the world does, in many circumſtances, reſemble an animal body, yet is the analogy alſo defective in many circumſtances the moſt material; no organs of ſenſe; no ſeat of thought or reaſon; no one preciſe origin of motion and action. In ſhort, it ſeems to bear a ſtronger reſemblance to a vegetable than to an animal; and your inference would be ſo far inconcluſive in favor of the ſoul of the world.

But in the next place, your theory ſeems to imply the eternity of the world; and that is a principle which, I think, can be refuted by the ſtrongeſt reaſons and probabilities. I ſhall ſuggeſt an argument to this purpoſe, which, I believe, has not been inſiſted on by any writer. Thoſe who reaſon from the late origin of arts and ſciences, though their inference wants not force, may perhaps be refuted by conſiderations derived from the nature of human ſociety, which is in continual revolution, between ignorance and knowledge, liberty and ſlavery, riches and poverty; ſo that it is impoſſible for us, from our

limited experience, to foretel with aſſurance what events may or may not be expected. Ancient learning and hiſtory ſeem to have been in great danger of entirely periſhing after the inundation of the barbarous nations; and had theſe convulſions continued a little longer, or been a little more violent, we ſhould not probably have now known what paſſed in the world a few centuries before us. Nay, were it not for the ſuperſtition of the Popes, who preſerved a little jargon of Latin, in order to ſupport the appearance of an ancient and univerſal church, that tongue muſt have been utterly loſt: in which caſe, the weſtern world, being totally barbarous, would not have been in a fit diſpoſition for receiving the Greek language and learning, which was conveyed to them after the ſacking of Conſtantinople. When learning and books had been extinguiſhed, even the mechanical arts would have fallen conſiderably to decay; and it is eaſily imagined, that fable or tradition might aſcribe to them a much later origin than the true one. This vulgar argument, therefore, againſt the eternity of the world, ſeems a little precarious.

But here appears to be the foundation of a better argument. Lucullus was the firſt that brought cherry-trees from Aſia to Europe; though that tree thrives ſo well in many European climates, that it grows in the woods without any culture. Is it poſſible that, throughout a whole eternity, no European had ever paſſed into Aſia, and thought of tranſplanting ſo delicious a fruit into his own country? Or if the tree was once tranſplanted and propagated,

how could it ever afterwards periſh? Empires may riſe and fall; liberty and ſlavery ſucceed alternately; ignorance and knowledge give place to each other; but the cherry-tree will ſtill remain in the woods of Greece, Spain, and Italy, and will never be affected by the revolutions of human ſociety.

It is not two thouſand years ſince vines were tranſplanted into France; though there is no climate in the world more favorable to them. It is not three centuries ſince horſes, cows, ſheep, ſwine, dogs, corn, were known in America. It is poſſible that, during the revolutions of a whole eternity, there never aroſe a Columbus, who might open the communication between Europe and that continent? We may as well imagine, that all men would wear ſtockings for ten thouſand years, and never have the ſenſe to think of garters to tie them. All theſe ſeem convincing proofs of the youth, or rather infancy, of the world; as being founded on the operation of principles more conſtant and ſteady than thoſe by which human ſociety is governed and directed. Nothing leſs than a total convulſion of the elements will ever deſtroy all the European animals and vegetables which are now to be found in the Weſtern world.

And what argument have you againſt ſuch convulſions, replied Philo? Strong and almoſt inconteſtable proofs may be traced over the whole earth, that every part of this globe has continued for many ages entirely covered with water. And though order were ſuppoſed inſeparable from matter, and inherent in it; yet may matter be ſuſceptible of many and great revolutions, through the endleſs periods of

eternal

eternal duration. The inceſſant changes, to which every part of it is ſubject, ſeem to intimate ſome ſuch general transformations; though at the ſame time it is obſervable, that all the changes and corruptions of which we have ever had experience, are but paſſages from one ſtate of order to another; nor can matter ever reſt in total deformity and confuſion. What we ſee in the parts, we may infer in the whole; at leaſt, that is the method of reaſoning on which you reſt your whole theory. And were I obliged to defend any particular ſyſtem of this nature (which I never willingly ſhould do), I eſteem none more plauſible than that which aſcribes an eternal inherent principle of order to the world; though attended with great and continual revolutions and alterations. This at once ſolves all difficulties; and if the ſolution, by being ſo general, is not entirely complete and ſatisfactory, it is at leaſt a theory that we muſt, ſooner or later, have recourſe to, whatever ſyſtem we embrace. How could things have been as they are, were there not an original, inherent principle of order ſomewhere, in thought or in matter? And it is indifferent to which of theſe we give the preference. Chance has no place, on any hypotheſis, ſceptical or religious. Every thing is ſurely governed by ſteady, inviolable laws. And were the inmoſt eſſence of things laid open to us, we ſhould then diſcover a ſcene, of which, at preſent, we can have no idea. Inſtead of admiring the order of natural beings, we ſhould clearly ſee, that it was abſolutely impoſſible for them, in the ſmalleſt article, ever to admit of any other diſpoſition.

Were any one inclined to revive the ancient Pagan Theology, which maintained, as we learn from Heſiod, that this globe was governed by 30,000 deities, who aroſe from the unknown powers of nature; you would naturally object, Cleanthes, that nothing is gained by this hypotheſis; and that it is as eaſy to ſuppoſe all men and animals, beings more numerous, but leſs perfect, to have ſprung immediately from a like origin. Puſh the ſame inference a ſtep farther; and you will find a numerous ſociety of deities as explicable as one univerſal deity, who poſſeſſes, within himſelf, the powers and perfections of the whole ſociety. All theſe ſyſtems, then, of Scepticiſm, Polytheiſm, and Theiſm, you muſt allow, on your principles, to be on a like footing, and that no one of them has any advantage over the others. You may thence learn the fallacy of your principles.

PART VII.

BUT here, continued Philo, in examining the ancient ſyſtem of the ſoul of the world, there ſtrikes me, all on a ſudden, a new idea, which, if juſt, muſt go near to ſubvert all your reaſoning, and deſtroy even your firſt inferences on which you repoſe ſuch confidence. If the univerſe bears a greater likeneſs to animal bodies and to vegetables, than to the works of human art, it is more probable that its cauſe reſembles the cauſe of the former than that of the latter; and its origin ought rather to be aſcribed to generation or vegetation than to reaſon or deſign. Your concluſion, even according to your own principles, is therefore lame and defective.

Pray open up this argument a little farther, ſaid Demea; for I do not rightly apprehend it, in that conciſe manner in which you have expreſſed it.

Our friend Cleanthes, replied Philo, as you have heard, aſſerts, that ſince no queſtion of fact can be proved otherwiſe than by experience, the exiſtence of a deity admits not of proof from any other medium. The world, ſays he, reſembles the works of human contrivance: therefore its cauſe muſt alſo reſemble that of the other. Here we may remark, that the operation of one very ſmall part of nature, to wit man, upon another very ſmall part, to wit that inanimate matter lying within his reach, is the rule by which Cleanthes judges of the origin of the whole; and he meaſures objects, ſo widely diſproportioned

by the ſame individual ſtandard. But to wave all objections drawn from this topic, I affirm, that there are other parts of the univerſe (beſides the machines of human invention) which bear ſtill a greater reſemblance to the fabric of the world, and which therefore afford a better conjecture concerning the univerſal origin of this ſyſtem. Theſe parts are animals and vegetables. The world plainly reſembles more an animal or a vegetable, than it does a watch or a knitting-loom. Its cauſe, therefore, it is more probable, reſembles the cauſe of the former. The cauſe of the former is generation or vegetation. The cauſe, therefore, of the world, we may infer to be ſomething ſimilar or analogous to generation or vegetation.

But how is it conceivable, ſaid Demea, that the world can ariſe from any thing ſimilar to vegetation or generation?

Very eaſily, replied Philo. In like manner as a tree ſheds its ſeed into the neighbouring fields, and produces other trees; ſo the great vegetable, the world, or this planetary ſyſtem, produces within itſelf certain ſeeds; which, being ſcattered into the ſurrounding chaos, vegetate into new worlds. A comet, for inſtance, is the ſeed of a world; and after it has been fully ripened, by paſſing from ſun to ſun, and ſtar to ſtar, it is at laſt toſſed into the unformed elements which every where ſurround this univerſe, and immediately ſprouts up into a new ſyſtem.

Or if, for the ſake of variety (for I ſee no other advantage), we ſhould ſuppoſe this world to be an animal; a comet is the egg of this animal: and in

like manner as an oſtrich lays its egg in the ſand, which, without any farther care, hatches the egg, and produces a new animal; ſo..... I underſtand you, ſays Demea: But what wild, arbitrary ſuppoſitions are theſe? What *data* have you for ſuch extraordinary concluſions? And is the ſlight, imaginary reſemblance of the world to a vegetable or an animal ſufficient to eſtabliſh the ſame inference with regard to both? Objects, which are in general ſo widely different, ought they to be a ſtandard for each other?

Right, cries Philo: This is the topic on which I have all along inſiſted. I have ſtill aſſerted, that we have no *data* to eſtabliſh any ſyſtem of coſmogony. Our experience, ſo imperfect in itſelf, and ſo limited both in extent and duration, can afford us no probable conjecture concerning the whole of things. But if we muſt needs fix on ſome hypotheſis, by what rule, pray, ought we to determine our choice? Is there any other rule than the greater ſimilarity of the objects compared? And does not a plant or an animal, which ſprings from vegetation or generation, bear a ſtronger reſemblance to the world, than does any artificial machine, which ariſes from reaſon and deſign?

But what is this vegetation and generation of which you talk, ſaid Demea? Can you explain their operations, and anatomize that fine internal ſtructure on which they depend?

As much, at leaſt, replied Philo, as Cleanthes can explain the operations of reaſon, or anatomize that internal ſtructure on which *it* depends. But

without any ſuch elaborate diſquiſitions, when I ſee an animal, I infer that it ſprang from generation; and that with as great certainty as you conclude a houſe to have been reared by deſign. Theſe words, *generation*, *reaſon*, mark only certain powers and energies in nature, whoſe effects are known, but whoſe eſſence is incomprehenſible; and one of theſe principles, more than the other, has no privilege for being made a ſtandard to the whole of nature.

In reality, Demea, it may reaſonably be expected, that the larger the views are which we take of things, the better will they conduct us in our concluſions concerning ſuch extraordinary and ſuch magnificent ſubjects. In this little corner of the world alone, there are four principles, *Reaſon*, *Inſtinct*, *Generation*, *Vegetation*, which are ſimilar to each other, and are the cauſes of ſimilar effects. What a number of other principles may we naturally ſuppoſe in the immenſe extent and variety of the univerſe, could we travel from planet to planet and from ſyſtem to ſyſtem, in order to examine each part of this mighty fabric? Any one of theſe four principles above mentioned (and a hundred others, which lie open to our conjecture) may afford us a theory, by which to judge of the origin of the world; and it is a palpable and egregious partiality, to confine our view entirely to that principle by which our own minds operate. Were this principle more intelligible on that account, ſuch a partiality might be ſomewhat excuſable: But reaſon, in its internal fabric and ſtructure, is really as little known to us as inſtinct or vegetation; and perhaps even that vague, undeterminate word, *Nature*,

to which the vulgar refer every thing, is not at the bottom more inexplicable. The effects of theſe principles are all known to us from experience: But the principles themſelves, and their manner of operation, are totally unknown: Nor is it leſs intelligible, or leſs conformable to experience, to ſay, that the world aroſe by vegetation from a ſeed ſhed by another world, than to ſay that it aroſe from a divine reaſon or contrivance, according to the ſenſe in which Cleanthes underſtands it.

But methinks, ſaid Demea, if the world had a vegetative quality, and could ſow the ſeeds of new worlds into the infinite chaos, this power would be ſtill an additional argument for deſign in its author. For whence could ariſe ſo wonderful a faculty but from deſign? Or how can order ſpring from any thing which perceives not that order which it beſtows?

You need only look around you, replied Philo, to ſatisfy yourſelf with regard to this queſtion. A tree beſtows order and organization on that tree which ſprings from it, without knowing the order: an animal, in the ſame manner, on its offspring; a bird, on its neſt: and inſtances of this kind are even more frequent in the world, than thoſe of order, which ariſe from reaſon and contrivance. To ſay that all this order in animals and vegetables proceeds ultimately from deſign, is begging the queſtion: nor can that great point be aſcertained otherwiſe than by proving, *à priori*, both that order is, from its nature, inſeparably attached to thought; and that it can never, of itſelf, or from original unknown principles belong to matter.

But farther, Demea, this objection, which you urge, can never be made uſe of by Cleanthes, without renouncing a defence which he has already made againſt one of my objections. When I inquired concerning the cauſe of that ſupreme reaſon and intelligence, into which he reſolves every thing; he told me, that the impoſſibility of ſatisfying ſuch inquiries could never be admitted as an objection in any ſpecies of philoſophy. *We muſt ſtop ſomewhere*, ſays he; *nor is it ever within the reach of human capacity to explain ultimate cauſes, or ſhow the laſt connexions of any objects. It is ſufficient, if the ſteps, ſo far as we go, are ſupported by experience and obſervation.* Now, that vegetation and generation, as well as reaſon, are experienced to be principles of order in nature; is undeniable. If I reſt my ſyſtem of coſmogony on the former preferably to the latter, it is at my choice. The matter ſeems entirely arbitrary. And when Cleanthes aſks me what is the cauſe of my great vegetative or generative faculty, I am equally entitled to aſk him the cauſe of his great reaſoning principle. Theſe queſtions we have agreed to forbear on both ſides; and it is chiefly his intereſt on the preſent occaſion to ſtick to this agreement. Judging by our limited and imperfect experience, generation has ſome privileges above reaſon: For we ſee every day the latter ariſe from the former, never the former from the latter.

Compare, I beſeech you, the conſequences on both ſides. The world, ſay I, reſembles an animal; therefore it is an animal, therefore it aroſe from generation. The ſteps, I confeſs, are wide; yet there is ſome

ſmall appearance of analogy in each ſtep. The world ſays Cleanthes, reſembles a machine; therefore it is a machine, therefore it aroſe from deſign. The ſteps here are equally wide, and the analogy leſs ſtriking. And if he pretends to carry on *my* hypotheſis a ſtep farther, and to infer deſign or reaſon from the great principle of generation, on which I inſiſt; I may, with better authority, uſe the ſame freedom to puſh farther *his* hypotheſis, and infer a divine generation or theogony from his principle of reaſon. I have at leaſt ſome faint ſhadow of experience, which is the utmoſt that can ever be attained in the preſent ſubject. Reaſon, in innumerable inſtances, is obſerved to ariſe from the principle of generation, and never to ariſe from any other principle.

Heſiod, and all the ancient mythologiſts, were ſo ſtruck with this analogy, that they univerſally explained the origin of nature from an animal birth and copulation. Plato too, ſo far as he is intelligible, ſeems to have adopted ſome ſuch notion in his Timæus.

The Bramins aſſert, that the world aroſe from an infinite ſpider, who ſpun this whole complicated maſs from his bowels, and annihilates afterwards the whole or any part of it, by abſorbing it again, and reſolving it into his own eſſence. Here is a ſpecies of coſmogony, which appears to us ridiculous; becauſe a ſpider is a little contemptible animal, whoſe operations we are never likely to take for a model of the whole univerſe. But ſtill here is a new ſpecies of analogy, even in our globe. And were there a planet wholly inhabited by ſpiders (which is very poſſible),

this inference would there appear as natural and irrefragable as that which in our planet aſcribes the origin of all things to deſign and intelligence, as explained by Cleanthes. Why an orderly ſyſtem may not be ſpun from the belly as well as from the brain, it will be difficult for him to give a ſatisfactory reaſon.

I muſt confeſs, Philo, replied Cleanthes, that of all men living, the taſk which you have undertaken, of raiſing doubts and objections, ſuits you beſt, and ſeems, in a manner, natural and unavoidable to you. So great is your fertility of invention, that I am not aſhamed to acknowledge myſelf unable, on a ſudden, to ſolve regularly ſuch out-of-the-way difficulties as you inceſſantly ſtart upon me: though I clearly ſee, in general, their fallacy and error. And I queſtion not, but you are yourſelf, at preſent, in the ſame caſe, and have not the ſolution ſo ready as the objection: while you muſt be ſenſible, that common ſenſe and reaſon are entirely againſt you: and that ſuch whimſies as you have delivered, may puzzle, but never can convince us.

PART VIII.

WHAT you aſcribe to the fertility of my invention, replied Philo, is entirely owing to the nature of the ſubject. In ſubjects, adapted to the narrow compaſs of human reaſon, there is commonly but one determination, which carries probability or conviction with it; and to a man of ſound judgment, all other ſuppoſitions, but that one, appear entirely abſurd and chimerical. But in ſuch queſtions as the preſent, a hundred contradictory views may preſerve a kind of imperfect analogy; and invention has here full ſcope to exert itſelf. Without any great effort of thought, I believe that I could, in an inſtant, propoſe other ſyſtems of coſmogony, which would have ſome faint appearance of truth; though it is a thouſand, a million to one, if either yours or any one of mine be the true ſyſtem.

For inſtance; what if I ſhould revive the old Epicurean hypotheſis? This is commonly, and I believe juſtly, eſteemed the moſt abſurd ſyſtem that has yet been propoſed; yet, I know not, whether, with a few alterations, it might not be brought to bear a faint appearance of probability. Inſtead of ſuppoſing matter infinite, as Epicurus did; let us ſuppoſe it finite. A finite number of particles is only ſuſceptible of finite tranſpoſitions: and it muſt happen, in an eternal duration, that every poſſible order or poſition muſt be tried an infinite number of times. This world, therefore, with all its events, even the

moſt minute, has before been produced and deſtroyed, and will again be produced and deſtroyed, without any bounds and limitations. No one, who has a conception of the powers of infinite, in compariſon of finite, will ever ſcruple this determination.

But this ſuppoſes, ſaid Demea, that matter can acquire motion, without any voluntary agent or firſt mover.

And where is the difficulty, replied Philo, of that ſuppoſition? Every event, before experience, is equally difficult and incomprehenſible; and every event, after experience, is equally eaſy and intelligible. Motion, in many inſtances, from gravity, from elaſticity, from electricity, begins in matter, without any known voluntary agent: and to ſuppoſe always, in theſe caſes, an unknown voluntary agent, is mere hypotheſis; and hypotheſis attended with no advantages. The beginning of motion in matter itſelf it as conceivable *à priori*, as its communication from mind and intelligence.

Beſides; why may not motion have been propagated by impulſe through all eternity; and the ſame ſtock of it, or nearly the ſame, be ſtill upheld in the univerſe? As much as is loſt by the compoſition of motion, as much is gained by its reſolution. And whatever the cauſes are, the fact is certain, that matter is, and always has been, in continual agitation, as far as human experience or tradition reaches. There is not probably, at preſent, in the whole univerſe, one particle of matter at abſolute reſt.

And this very conſideration too, continued Philo, which we have ſtumbled on in the courſe of the

argument, ſuggeſts a new hypotheſis of coſmogony, that is not abſolutely abſurd and improbable. Is there a ſyſtem, an order, an economy of things, by which matter can preſerve that perpetual agitation which ſeems eſſential to it, and yet maintain a conſtancy in the forms which it produces? There certainly is ſuch an economy: for this is actually the caſe with the preſent world. The continual motion of matter, therefore, in leſs than infinite tranſpoſitions, muſt produce this economy or order; and by its very nature, that order, when once eſtabliſhed, ſupports itſelf, for many ages, if not to eternity.

But wherever matter is ſo poiſed, arranged, and adjuſted, as to continue in perpetual motion, and yet preſerve a conſtancy in the forms, its ſituation muſt, of neceſſity, have all the ſame appearance of art and contrivance which we obſerve at preſent. All the parts of each form muſt have a relation to each other, and to the whole: and the whole itſelf muſt have a relation to the other parts of the univerſe; to the element, in which the form ſubſiſts; to the materials, with which it repairs its waſte and decay; and to every other form, which is hoſtile or friendly. A defect in any of theſe particulars deſtroys the form; and the matter of which it is compoſed is again ſet looſe, and is thrown into irregular motions and fermentations, till it unite itſelf to ſome other regular form. If no ſuch form be prepared to receive it, and if there be a great quantity of this corrupted matter in the univerſe, the univerſe itſelf is entirely diſordered; whether it be the feeble embryo of a world in its firſt beginnings that is thus deſtroyed,

or the rotten carcaſe of one languiſhing in old age and infirmity. In either caſe, a chaos enſues; till finite, though innumerable, revolutions produce at laſt ſome forms, whoſe parts and organs are ſo adjuſted as to ſupport the forms amidſt a continued ſucceſſion of matter.

Suppoſe (for we ſhall endeavour to vary the expreſſion) that matter were thrown into any poſition, by a blind, unguided force; it is evident, that this firſt poſition muſt in all probability be the moſt confuſed and moſt diſorderly imaginable, without any reſemblance to thoſe works of human contrivance, which, along with a ſymmetry of parts, diſcover an adjuſtment of means to ends, and a tendency to ſelf-preſervation. If the actuating force ceaſe after this operation, matter muſt remain for ever in diſorder. and continue an immenſe chaos, without any proportion or activity. But ſuppoſe, that the actuating force, whatever it be, ſtill continues in matter, this firſt poſition will immediately give place to a ſecond, which will likewiſe in all probability be as diſorderly as the firſt, and ſo on through many ſucceſſions of changes and revolutions. No particular order or poſition ever continues a moment unaltered. The original force, ſtill remaining in activity, gives a perpetual reſtleſſneſs to matter. Every poſſible ſituation is produced, and inſtantly deſtroyed. If a glimpſe or dawn of order appears for a moment, it is inſtantly hurried away, and confounded, by that never-ceaſing force which actuates every part of matter.

Thus the univerſe goes on for many ages in a continued ſucceſſion of chaos and diſorder. But is it

not poſſible that it may ſettle at laſt, ſo as not to loſe its motion and active force (for that we have ſuppoſed inherent in it), yet ſo as to preſerve an uniformity of appearance, amidſt the continual motion and fluctuation of its parts? This we find to be the caſe with the univerſe at preſent. Every individual is perpetually changing, and every part of every individual; and yet the whole rémains in appearance the ſame. May we not hope for ſuch a poſition, or rather be aſſured of it, from the eternal revolutions of unguided matter; and may not this account for all the appearing wiſdom and contrivance which is in the univerſe? Let us contemplate the ſubject a little, and we ſhall find, that this adjuſtment, if attained by matter, of a ſeeming ſtability in the forms, with a real and perpetual revolution or motion of parts, affords a plauſible, if not a true, ſolution of the difficulty.

It is in vain, therefore, to inſiſt upon the uſes of the parts in animals or vegetables, and their curious adjuſtment to each other. I would fain know, how an animal could ſubſiſt, unleſs its parts were ſo adjuſted? Do we not find, that it immediately periſhes whenever this adjuſtment ceaſes, and that its matter corrupting tries ſome new form? It happens, indeed, that the parts of the world are ſo well adjuſted, that ſome regular form immediately lays claim to this corrupted matter: and if it were not ſo, could the world ſubſiſt? Muſt it not diſſolve as well as the animal, and paſs through new poſitions and ſituations; till in a great, but finite ſucceſſion, it fall at laſt into the preſent or ſome ſuch order?

It is well, replied Cleanthes, you told us, that this hypotheſis was ſuggeſted on a ſudden, in the courſe of the argument. Had you had leiſure to examine it, you would ſoon have perceived the inſuperable objections to which it is expoſed. No form, you ſay, can ſubſiſt, unleſs it poſſeſs thoſe powers and organs requiſite for its ſubſiſtence: ſome new order or economy muſt be tried, and ſo on, without intermiſſion; till at laſt ſome order, which can ſupport and maintain itſelf, is fallen upon. But according to this hypotheſis, whence ariſe the many conveniences and advantages which men and all animals poſſeſs? Two eyes, two ears, are not abſolutely neceſſary for the ſubſiſtence of the ſpecies. Human race might have been propagated and preſerved, without horſes, dogs, cows, ſheep, and thoſe innumerable fruits and products which ſerve to our ſatisfaction and enjoyment. If no camels had been created for the uſe of man in the ſandy deſerts of Africa and Arabia, would the world have been diſſolved? If no loadſtone had been framed to give that wonderful and uſeful direction to the needle, would human ſociety and the human kind have been immediately extinguiſhed? Though the maxims of Nature be in general very frugal, yet inſtances of this kind are far from being rare; and any one of them is a ſufficient proof of deſign, and of a benevolent deſign, which gave riſe to the order and arrangement of the univerſe.

At leaſt, you may ſafely infer, ſaid Philo, that the foregoing hypotheſis is ſo far incomplete and imperfect; which I ſhall not ſcruple to allow. But can

we

we ever reaſonably expect greater ſucceſs in any attempts of this nature? Or can we ever hope to erect a ſyſtem of coſmogony, that will be liable to no exceptions, and will contain no circumſtance repugnant to our limited and imperfect experience of the analogy of Nature? Your theory itſelf cannot ſurely pretend to any ſuch advantage; even though you have run into *Anthropomorphiſm*, the better to preſerve a conformity to common experience. Let us once more put it to trial. In all inſtances which we have ever ſeen, ideas are copied from real objects, and are ectypal, not archetypal, to expreſs myſelf in learned terms: You reverſe this order, and give thought the precedence. In all inſtances, which we have ever ſeen, thought has no influence upon matter, except where that matter is ſo conjoined with it as to have an equal reciprocal influence upon it. No animal can move immediately any thing but the members of its own body; and indeed, the equality of action and re-action ſeems to be an univerſal law of Nature: But your theory implies a contradiction to this experience. Theſe inſtances, with many more, which it were eaſy to collect, (particularly the ſuppoſition of a mind or ſyſtem of thought that is eternal, or, in other words, an animal ingenerable and immortal); theſe inſtances, I ſay, may teach all of us ſobriety in condemning each other; and let us ſee, that as no ſyſtem of this kind ought ever to be received from a ſlight analogy, ſo neither ought any to be rejected on account of a ſmall incongruity. For that is an inconvenience

from which we can juſtly pronounce no one to be exempted.

All religious ſyſtems, it is confeſſed, are ſubject to great and inſuperable difficulties. Each diſputant triumphs in his turn; while he carries on an offenſive war, and expoſes the abſurdities, barbarities, and pernicious tenets, of his antagoniſt. But all of them, on the whole, prepare a complete triumph for the *Sceptic;* who tells them, that no ſyſtem ought ever to be embraced with regard to ſuch ſubjects: For this plain reaſon, that no abſurdity ought ever to be aſſented to with regard to any ſubject. A total ſuſpenſe of judgment is here our only reaſonable reſource. And if every attack, as is commonly obſerved, and no defence, among Theologians, is ſucceſsful; how complete muſt be *his* victory, who remains always, with all mankind, on the offenſive, and has himſelf no fixed ſtation or abiding city, which he is ever, on any occaſion, obliged to defend?

PART IX.

But if ſo many difficulties attend the argument *à poſteriori*, ſaid Demea; had we not better adhere to that ſimple and ſublime argument *à priori*, which, by offering to us infallible demonſtration, cuts off at once all doubt and difficulty? By this argument, too, we may prove the Infinity of the divine attributes; which, I am afraid, can never be aſcertained with certainty from any other topic. For how can an effect, which either is finite, or, for aught we know, may be ſo; how can ſuch an effect, I ſay, prove an infinite cauſe? The unity too of the Divine Nature, it is very difficult, if not abſolutely impoſſible, to deduce merely from contemplating the works of nature; nor will the uniformity alone of the plan, even were it allowed, give us any aſſurance of that attribute. Whereas the argument *à priori*....

You ſeem to reaſon, Demea, interpoſed Cleanthes, as if thoſe advantages and conveniences in the abſtract argument were full proofs of its ſolidity. But it is firſt proper, in my opinion, to determine what argument of this nature you chuſe to inſiſt on; and we ſhall afterwards, from itſelf, better than from its *uſeful* conſequences, endeavour to determine what value we ought to put upon it.

The argument, replied Demea, which I would inſiſt on, is the common one. Whatever exiſts, muſt have a cauſe or reaſon of its exiſtence; it being abſolutely impoſſible for any thing to produce itſelf, or be the cauſe of its own exiſtence. In mounting

up, therefore, from effects to cauſes, we muſt either go on in tracing an infinite ſucceſſion, without any ultimate cauſe at all; or muſt at laſt have recourſe to ſome ultimate cauſe: that is *neceſſarily* exiſtent: Now that the firſt ſuppoſition is abſurd, may be thus proved. In the infinite chain or ſucceſſion of cauſes and effects, each ſingle effect is determined to exiſt by the power and efficacy of that cauſe which immediately preceded; but the whole eternal chain or ſucceſſion, taken together, is not determined or cauſed by any thing; and yet it is evident that it requires a cauſe or reaſon, as much as any particular object which begins to exiſt in time. The queſtion is ſtill reaſonable. Why this particular ſucceſſion of cauſes exiſted from eternity, and not any other ſucceſſion, or no ſucceſſion at all? If there be no neceſſarily-exiſtent being, any ſuppoſition which can be formed is equally poſſible; nor is there any more abſurdity in Nothing's having exiſted from eternity, than there is in that ſucceſſion of cauſes which conſtitutes the univerſe. What was it then which determined Something to exiſt rather than Nothing, and beſtowed being on a particular poſſibility, excluſive of the reſt? *External cauſes*, there are ſuppoſed to be none. *Chance* is a word without a meaning. Was it *Nothing?* But that can never produce any thing. We muſt, therefore, have recourſe to a neceſſarily-exiſtent Being, who carries the Reaſon of his exiſtence in himſelf; and who cannot be ſuppoſed not to exiſt, without an expreſs contradiction. There is conſequently ſuch a Being; that is, there is a Deity.

I ſhall not leave it to Philo, ſaid Cleanthes, (though I know that the ſtarting objections is his chief delight) to point out the weakneſs of this metaphyſical reaſoning. It ſeems to me ſo obviouſly ill-grounded, and at the ſame time of ſo little conſequence to the cauſe of true piety and religion, that I ſhall myſelf venture to ſhow the fallacy of it.

I ſhall begin with obſerving, that there is an evident abſurdity in pretending to demonſtrate a matter of fact, or to prove it by any arguments *à priori*. Nothing is demonſtrable, unleſs the contrary implies a contradiction. Nothing, that is diſtinctly conceivable, implies a contradiction. Whatever we conceive as exiſtent, we can alſo conceive as non-exiſtent. There is no being, therefore, whoſe non-exiſtence implies a contradiction. Conſequently there is no being whoſe exiſtence is demonſtrable. I propoſe this argument as entirely deciſive, and am willing to reſt the whole controverſy upon it.

It is pretended that the Deity is a neceſſarily-exiſtent being; and this neceſſity of his exiſtence is attempted to be explained by aſſerting, that, if we knew his whole eſſence or nature, we ſhould perceive it to be as impoſſible for him not to exiſt as for twice two not to be four. But it is evident, that this can never happen, while our faculties remain the ſame as at preſent. It will ſtill be poſſible for us, at any time, to conceive the non-exiſtence of what we formerly conceived to exiſt; nor can the mind ever lie under a neceſſity of ſuppoſing any object to remain always in being; in the ſame manner as we lie under a neceſſity of always conceiving twice two to be

four. The words, therefore, *neceſſary exiſtence*, have no meaning; or, which is the ſame thing, none that is conſiſtent.

But farther: Why may not the material univerſe be the neceſſarily-exiſtent Being, according to this pretended explication of neceſſity? We dare not affirm that we know all the qualities of matter; and for aught we can determine, it may contain ſome qualities, which, were they known, would make its non-exiſtence appear as great a contradiction as that twice two is five. I find only one argument employed to prove, that the material world is not the neceſſarily-exiſtent Being; and this argument is derived from the contingency both of the matter and the form of the world. "Any particle of matter," it is ſaid[7], "may be *conceived* to be annihilated; "and any form may be *conceived* to be altered. "Such an annihilation or alteration, therefore, is "not impoſſible." But it ſeems a great partiality not to perceive, that the ſame argument extends equally to the Deity, ſo far as we have any conception of him; and that the mind can at leaſt imagine him to be non-exiſtent, or his attributes to be altered. It muſt be ſome unknown, inconceivable qualities, which can make his non-exiſtence appear impoſſible, or his attributes unalterable: And no reaſon can be aſſigned, why theſe qualities may not belong to matter. As they are altogether unknown and inconceivable, they can never be proved incompatible with it.

Add to this, that in tracing an eternal ſucceſſion of objects, it ſeems abſurd to inquire for a general

[7] Dr. Clarke.

cauſe or firſt author. How can any thing, that exiſts from eternity, have a cauſe; ſince that relation implies a priority in time, and a beginning of exiſtence?

In ſuch a chain, too, or ſucceſſion of objects, each part is cauſed by that which preceded it, and cauſes that which ſucceeds it. Where then is the difficulty? But the Whole; you ſay, wants a cauſe. I anſwer, that the uniting of theſe parts into a whole, like the uniting of ſeveral diſtinct counties into one kingdom, or ſeveral diſtinct members into one body, is performed merely by an arbitrary act of the mind, and has no influence on the nature of things. Did I ſhow you the particular cauſes of each individual in a collection of twenty particles of matter, I ſhould think it very unreaſonable, ſhould you afterwards aſk me, what was the cauſe of the whole twenty? That is ſufficiently explained in explaining the cauſe of the parts.

Though the reaſonings which you have urged, Cleanthes, may well excuſe me, ſaid Philo, from ſtarting any farther difficulties; yet I cannot forbear inſiſting ſtill upon another topic. It is obſerved by arithmeticians, that the products of 9 compoſe always either 9 or ſome leſſer product of 9; if you add together all the characters of which any of the former products is compoſed. Thus, of 18, 27, 36, which are products of 9, you make 9, by adding 1 to 8, 2 to 7, 3 to 6. Thus, 369 is a product alſo of 9; and if you add 3, 6, and 9, you make 18, a leſſer product of 9[s]. By a ſuperficial obſerver, ſo wonderful

[s] République des Lettres, Août 1685.

a regularity may be admired as the effect either of chance or design; but a skilful algebraist immediately concludes it to be the work of necessity; and demonstrates, that it must for ever result from the nature of these numbers. Is it not probable, I ask, that the whole economy of the universe is conducted by a like necessity, though no human algebra can furnish a key which solves the difficulty? And instead of admiring the order of natural beings, may it not happen, that, could we penetrate into the intimate nature of bodies, we should clearly see why it was absolutely impossible they could ever admit of any other disposition? So dangerous is it to introduce this idea of necessity into the present question! and so naturally does it afford an inference directly opposite to the religious hypothesis!

But dropping all these abstractions, continued Philo, and confining ourselves to more familiar topics; I shall venture to add an observation, that the argument *à priori* has seldom been found very convincing, except to people of a metaphysical head, who have accustomed themselves to abstract reasoning, and who finding from mathematics, that the understanding frequently leads to truth, through obscurity, and contrary to first appearances, have transferred the same habit of thinking to subjects where it ought not to have place. Other people, even of good sense and the best inclined to religion, feel always some deficiency in such arguments, though they are not perhaps able to explain distinctly where it lies. A certain proof, that men ever did, and ever will, derive their religion from other sources than from this species of reasoning.

PART X.

IT is my opinion, I own, replied Demea, that each man feels, in a manner, the truth of religion within his own breaſt; and from a conſciouſneſs of his imbecillity and miſery, rather than from any reaſoning, is led to ſeek protection from that Being, on whom he and all nature is dependent. So anxious or ſo tedious are even the beſt ſcenes of life, that futurity is ſtill the object of all our hopes and fears. We inceſſantly look forward, and endeavour, by prayers, adoration, and ſacrifice, to appeaſe thoſe unknown powers, whom we find, by experience, ſo able to afflict and oppreſs us. Wretched creatures that we are! what reſource for us amidſt the innumerable ills of life, did not religion ſuggeſt ſome methods of atonement, and appeaſe thoſe terrors with which we are inceſſantly agitated and tormented.

I am indeed perſuaded, ſaid Philo, that the beſt, and indeed the only, method of bringing every one to a due ſenſe of religion, is by juſt repreſentations of the miſery and wickedneſs of men. And for that purpoſe a talent of eloquence and ſtrong imagery is more requiſite than that of reaſoning and argument. For is it neceſſary to prove what every one feels within himſelf? It is only neceſſary to make us feel it, if poſſible, more intimately and ſenſibly.

The people, indeed, replied Demea, are ſufficiently convinced of this great and melancholy truth.

The miſeries of life; the unhappineſs of man; the general corruptions of our nature; the unſatisfactory enjoyment of pleaſures, riches, honors; theſe phraſes have become almoſt proverbial in all languages. And who can doubt of what all men declare from their own immediate feeling and experience?

In this point, ſaid Philo, the learned are perfectly agreed with the vulgar; and in all letters, *ſacred* and *profane*, the topic of human miſery has been inſiſted on with the moſt pathetic eloquence that ſorrow and melancholy could inſpire. The poets, who ſpeak from ſentiment, without a ſyſtem, and whoſe teſtimony has therefore the more authority, abound in images of this nature. From Homer down to Dr. Young, the whole inſpired tribe have ever been ſenſible, that no other repreſentation of things would ſuit the feeling and obſervation of each individual.

As to authorities, replied Demea, you need not ſeek them. Look round this library of Cleanthes. I ſhall venture to affirm, that, except authors of particular ſciences, ſuch as chymiſtry or botany, who have no occaſion to treat of human life, there is ſcarce one of thoſe innumerable writers, from whom the ſenſe of human miſery has not, in ſome paſſage or other, extorted a complaint and confeſſion of it. At leaſt, the chance is entirely on that ſide; and no one author has ever, ſo far as I can recollect, been ſo extravagant as to deny it.

There you muſt excuſe me, ſaid Philo: Leibnitz has denied it; and is perhaps the firſt [9] who

[9] That ſentiment has been maintained by Dr. King, and ſome few others, before Leibnitz; though by none of ſo great fame as that German philoſopher.

ventured upon ſo bold and paradoxical an opinion; at leaſt the firſt who made it eſſential to his philoſophical ſyſtem.

And by being the firſt, replied Demea, might he not have been ſenſible of his error? For is this a ſubject in which philoſophers can propoſe to make diſcoveries, eſpecially in ſo late an age? And can any man hope by a ſimple denial (for the ſubject ſcarcely admits of reaſoning) to bear down the united teſtimony of mankind, founded on ſenſe and conſciouſneſs?

And why ſhould man, added he, pretend to an exemption from the lot of all other animals? The whole earth, believe me, Philo, is curſed and polluted. A perpetual war is kindled amongſt all living creatures. Neceſſity, hunger, want, ſtimulate the ſtrong and courageous: Fear, anxiety, terror, agitate the weak and infirm. The firſt entrance into life gives anguiſh to the new-born infant and to its wretched parent: Weakneſs, impotence, diſtreſs, attend each ſtage of that life: and it is at laſt finiſhed in agony and horror.

Obſerve too, ſays Philo, the curious artifices of Nature in order to embitter the life of every living being. The ſtronger prey upon the weaker, and keep them in perpetual terror and anxiety. The weaker too, in their turn, often prey upon the ſtronger, and vex and moleſt them without relaxation. Conſider that innumerable race of inſects, which either are bred on the body of each animal, or flying about infix their ſtings in him. Theſe inſects have others ſtill leſs than themſelves, which torment them.

And thus on each hand, before and behind, above and below, every animal is ſurrounded with enemies, which inceſſantly ſeek his miſery and deſtruction.

Man alone, ſaid Demea, ſeems to be, in part, an exception to this rule. For by combination in ſociety, he can eaſily maſter lions, tigers, and bears, whoſe greater ſtrength and agility naturally enable them to prey upon him.

On the contrary, it is here chiefly, cried Philo, that the uniform and equal maxims of Nature are moſt apparent. Man, it is true, can by combination, ſurmount all his *real* enemies, and become maſter of the whole animal creation: but does he not immediately raiſe up to himſelf *imaginary* enemies, the demons of his fancy, who haunt him with ſuperſtitious terrors, and blaſt every enjoyment of life? His pleaſure, as he imagines, becomes, in their eyes, a crime: his food and repoſe give them umbrage and offence: his very ſleep and dreams furniſh new materials to anxious fear: and even death, his refuge from every other ill, preſents only the dread of endleſs and innumerable woes. Nor does the wolf moleſt more the timid flock, than ſuperſtition does the anxious breaſt of wretched mortals.

Beſides, conſider, Demea, this very ſociety, by which we ſurmount thoſe wild beaſts, our natural enemies; what new enemies does it not raiſe to us? What wo and miſery does it not occaſion? Man is the greateſt enemy of man. Oppreſſion, injuſtice, contempt, contumely, violence, ſedition, war, calumny, treachery, fraud; by theſe they mutually torment each other: and they would ſoon diſſolve

that ſociety which they had formed, were it not for the dread of ſtill greater ills which muſt attend their ſeparation.

But though theſe external inſults, ſaid Demea, from animals, from men, from all the elements, which aſſault us, form a frightful catalogue of woes, they are nothing in compariſon of thoſe which ariſe within ourſelves, from the diſtempered condition of our mind and body. How many lie under the lingering torment of diſeaſes? Hear the pathetic enumeration of the great poet.

> Inteſtine ſtone and ulcer, colic-pangs,
> Demoniac frenzy, moping melancholy,
> And moon-ſtruck madneſs, pining atrophy,
> Maraſmus, and wide-waſting peſtilence.
> Dire was the toſſing, deep the groans, Deſpair
> Tended the ſick, buſieſt from couch to couch.
> And over them triumphant Death his Dart
> Shook; but delay'd to ſtrike, though oft invok'd
> With vows, as their chief good and final hope.

The diſorders of the mind, continued Demea, though more ſecret, are not perhaps leſs diſmal and vexatious. Remorſe, ſhame, anguiſh, rage, diſappointment, anxiety, fear, dejection, deſpair; who has ever paſſed through life without cruel inroads from theſe tormentors? How many have ſcarcely ever felt any better ſenſations? Labor and poverty, ſo abhorred by every one, are the certain lot of the far greater number: and thoſe few privileged perſons, who enjoy eaſe and opulence, never reach contentment or true felicity. All the goods of life united

would not make a very happy man: but all the ills united would make a wretch indeed: and any one of them almoſt (and who can be free from every one?) nay often the abſence of one good (and who can poſſeſs all?) is ſufficient to render life ineligible.

Were a ſtranger to drop, on a ſudden, into this world, I would ſhow him, as a ſpecimen of its ills, an hoſpital full of diſeaſes, a priſon crowded with malefactors and debtors, a field of battle ſtrowedwith carcaſes, a fleet foundering in the ocean, a nation languiſhing under tyranny, famine, or peſtilence. To turn the gay ſide of life to him, and give him a notion of its pleaſures; whither ſhould I conduct him? to a ball, to an opera, to court? He might juſtly think that I was only ſhowing him a diverſity of diſtreſs and ſorrow.

There is no evading ſuch ſtriking inſtances, ſaid Philo, but by apologies, which ſtill farther aggravate the charge. Why have all men, I aſk, in all ages, complained inceſſantly of the miſeries of life? --They have no juſt reaſon, ſays one: theſe complaints proceed only from their diſcontented, repining, anxious diſpoſition.--- And can there poſſibly, I reply, be a more certain foundation of miſery, than ſuch a wretched temper?

But if they were really as unhappy as they pretend, ſays my antagoniſt, why do they remain in life?

Not ſatisfied with life, afraid of death.

This is the ſecret chain, ſays I, that holds us. We are terrified, not bribed, to the continuance of our exiſtence.

It is only a falſe delicacy, he may inſiſt, which a few refined ſpirits indulge, and which has ſpread theſe complaints among the whole race of mankind.— And what is this delicacy, I aſk, which you blame? Is it any thing but a greater ſenſibility to all the pleaſures and pains of life? and if the man of a delicate, refined temper, by being ſo much more alive than the reſt of the world, is only ſo much more unhappy; what judgment muſt we form in general of human life?

Let men remain at reſt, ſays our adverſary; and they will be eaſy. They are willing artificers of their own miſery.—No! reply I: an anxious languor follows their repoſe; diſappointment, vexation, trouble, their activity and ambition.

I can obſerve ſomething like what you mention in ſome others, replied Cleanthes: but I confeſs, I feel little or nothing of it in myſelf; and hope that it is not ſo common as you repreſent it.

If you feel not human miſery, yourſelf, cried Demea, I congratulate you on ſo happy a ſingularity. Others, ſeemingly the moſt proſperous, have not been aſhamed to vent their complaints in the moſt melancholy ſtrains. Let us attend to the great, the fortunate emperor Charles V. when tired with human grandeur, he reſigned all his extenſive dominions into the hands of his ſon. In the laſt harangue which he made on that memorable occaſion, he publicly avowed, *that the greateſt proſperities which he had ever enjoyed, had been mixed with ſo many adverſities, that he might truly ſay he had never enjoyed any ſatisfaction or contentment.* But did the retired life,

in which he ſought for ſhelter, afford him any greater happineſs? If we may credit his ſon's account, his repentance commenced the very day of his reſignation.

Cicero's fortune, from ſmall beginnings, roſe to the greateſt luſtre and renown; yet what pathetic complaints of the ills of life do his familiar letters, as well as philoſophical diſcourſes contain? And ſuitably to his own experience, he introduces Cato, the great, the fortunate Cato, proteſting in his old age, that had he a new life in his offer, he would reject the preſent.

Aſk yourſelf, aſk any of your acquaintance, whether they would live over again the laſt ten or twenty years of their life. No! but the next twenty, they ſay will be better:

> And from the dregs of life, hope to receive
> What the firſt ſprightly running could not give.

Thus at laſt they find (ſuch is the greatneſs of human miſery, it reconciles even contradictions) that they complain, at once, of the ſhortneſs of life, and of its vanity and ſorrow.

And is it poſſible, Cleanthes, ſaid Philo, that after all theſe reflections, and infinitely more, which might be ſuggeſted, you can ſtill perſevere in your Anthropomorphiſm, and aſſert the moral attributes of the Deity, his juſtice, benevolence, mercy, and rectitude, to be of the ſame nature with theſe virtues in human creatures? His power we allow infinite: whatever he wills is executed: but neither man nor any other animal is happy: therefore he does not will

their

their happineſs. His wiſdom is infinite: he is never miſtaken in chuſing the means to any end: but the courſe of Nature tends not to human or animal felicity: therefore it is not eſtabliſhed for that purpoſe. Through the whole compaſs of human knowledge, there are no inferences more certain and infallible than theſe. In what reſpect, then, do his benevolence and mercy reſemble the benevolence and mercy of men?

Epicurus's old queſtions are yet unanſwered.

Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able? then is he impotent. Is he able, but not willing? then is he malevolent. Is he both able and willing? whence then is evil?

You aſcribe, Cleanthes, (and I believe juſtly) a purpoſe and intention to Nature. But what, I beſeech you, is the object of that curious artifice and machinery, which ſhe has diſplayed in all animals? The preſervation alone of individuals, and propagation of the ſpecies. It ſeems enough for her purpoſe, if ſuch a rank be barely upheld in the univerſe, without any care or concern for the happineſs of the members that compoſe it. No reſource for this purpoſe: no machinery, in order merely to give pleaſure or eaſe: no fund of pure joy and contentment: no indulgence, without ſome want or neceſſity accompanying it. At leaſt, the few phenomena of this nature are overbalanced by oppoſite phenomena of ſtill greater importance.

Our ſenſe of muſic, harmony, and indeed beauty of all kinds, gives ſatisfaction, without being abſolutely neceſſary, to the preſervation and propagation

of the ſpecies. But what racking pains, on the other hand, ariſe from gouts, gravels, megrims, tooth-achs, rheumatiſms; where the injury to the animal-machinery is either ſmall or incurable? Mirth, laughter, play, frolic, ſeem gratuitous ſatisfactions, which have no farther tendency: ſpleen, melancholy, diſcontent, ſuperſtition, are pains of the ſame nature. How then does the divine benevolence diſplay itſelf, in the ſenſe of you Anthropomorphites? None but we Myſtics, as you were pleaſed to call us, can account for this ſtrange mixture of phenomena, by deriving it from attributes, infinitely perfect, but incomprehenſible.

And have you at laſt, ſaid Cleanthes ſmiling, betrayed your intentions, Philo? Your long agreement with Demea did indeed a little ſurpriſe me; but I find you were all the while erecting a concealed battery againſt me. And I muſt confeſs, that you have fallen upon a ſubject worthy of your noble ſpirit of oppoſition and controverſy. If you can make out the preſent point, and prove mankind to be unhappy or corrupted, there is an end at once of all religion. For to what purpoſe eſtabliſh the natural attributes of the Deity, while the moral are ſtill doubtful and uncertain?

You take umbrage very eaſily, replied Demea, at opinions the moſt innocent, and the moſt generally received even amongſt the religious and devout themſelves: and nothing can be more ſurpriſing than to find a topic like this, concerning the wickedneſs and miſery of man, charged with no leſs than Atheiſm and profaneneſs. Have not all pious divines and

preachers, who have indulged their rhetoric on ſo fertile a ſubject; have they not eaſily, I ſay, given a ſolution of any difficulties which may attend it? This world is but a point in compariſon of the univerſe; this life but a moment in compariſon of eternity. The preſent evil phenomena, therefore, are rectified in other regions, and in ſome future period of exiſtence. And the eyes of men, being then opened to larger views of things, ſee the whole connexion of general laws; and trace, with adoration, the benevolence and rectitude of the Deity, through all the mazes and intricacies of his providence.

No! replied Cleanthes, No! Theſe arbitrary ſuppoſitions can never be admitted, contrary to matter of fact, viſible and uncontroverted. Whence can any cauſe be known but from its known effects? Whence can any hypotheſis be proved but from the apparent phenomena? To eſtabliſh one hypotheſis upon another, is building entirely in the air; and the utmoſt we ever attain, by theſe conjectures and fictions, is to aſcertain the bare poſſibility of our opinion; but never can we, upon ſuch terms, eſtabliſh its reality.

The only method of ſupporting divine benevolence (and it is what I willingly embrace) is to deny abſolutely the miſery and wickedneſs of man. Your repreſentations are exaggerated; your melancholy views moſtly fictitious; your inferences contrary to fact and experience. Health is more commom than ſickneſs; pleaſure than pain; happineſs than miſery. And for one vexation which we meet with, we attain, upon computation, a hundred enjoyments.

Admitting your poſition, replied Philo, which yet is extremely doubtful, you muſt, at the ſame time, allow, that, if pain be leſs frequent than pleaſure, it is infinitely more violent and durable. One hour of it is often able to outweigh a day, a week, a month of our common inſipid enjoyments: And how many days, weeks, and months, are paſſed by ſeveral in the moſt acute torments? Pleaſure, ſcarcely in one inſtance, is ever able to reach ecſtaſy and rapture: And in no one inſtance can it continue for any time at its higheſt pitch and altitude. The ſpirits evaporate, the nerves relax, the fabric is diſordered, and the enjoyment quickly degenerates into fatigue and uneaſineſs. But pain often, good God! how often, riſes to torture and agony; and the longer it continues, it becomes ſtill more genuine agony and torture. Patience is exhauſted, courage languiſhes, melancholy ſeizes us; and nothing terminates our miſery but the removal of its cauſe, or another event, which is the ſole cure of all evil; but which, from our natural folly, we regard with ſtill greater horror and conſternation.

But not to inſiſt upon theſe topics, continued Philo, though moſt obvious, certain, and important, I muſt uſe the freedom to admoniſh you, Cleanthes, that you have put the controverſy upon a moſt dangerous iſſue, and are unawares introducing a total ſcepticiſm into the moſt eſſential articles of natural and revealed theology. What! no method of fixing a juſt foundation for religion, unleſs we allow the happineſs of human life, and maintain a continued exiſtence even in this world, with all our preſent

pains, infirmities, vexations, and follies, to be eligible and desirable! But this is contrary to every one's feeling and experience: It is contrary to an authority so established as nothing can subvert: No decisive proofs can ever be produced against this authority; nor is it possible for you to compute, estimate, and compare, all the pains and all the pleasures in the lives of all men and of all animals: And thus by your resting the whole system of religion on a point, which, from its very nature, must for ever be uncertain, you tacitly confess, that that system is equally uncertain.

But allowing you, what never will be believed, at least what you never possibly can prove, that animal, or at least human happiness, in this life, exceeds its misery, you have yet done nothing: for this is not, by any means, what we expect from infinite power, infinite wisdom, and infinite goodness. Why is there any misery at all in the world? Not by chance surely. From some cause then. Is it from the intention of the Deity? But he is perfectly benevolent. Is it contrary to his intention? But he is almighty. Nothing can shake the solidity of this reasoning, so short, so clear, so decisive; except we assert, that these subjects exceed all human capacity, and that our common measures of truth and falshood are not applicable to them; a topic which I have all along insisted on, but which you have from the beginning rejected with scorn and indignation.

But I will be contented to retire still from this intrenchment; for I deny that you can ever force me in it: I will allow, that pain or misery in man is

compatible with infinite power and goodneſs in the Deity, even in your ſenſe of theſe attributes: What are you advanced by all theſe conceſſions? A mere poſſible compatibility is not ſufficient. You muſt *prove* theſe pure, unmixt, and uncontrollable attributes from the preſent mixt and confuſed phenomena, and from theſe alone. A hopeful undertaking! Were the phenomena ever ſo pure and unmixt, yet being finite, they would be inſufficient for that purpoſe. How much more, where they are alſo ſo jarring and diſcordant?

Here, Cleanthes, I find myſelf at eaſe in my argument. Here I triumph. Formerly, when we argued concerning the natural attributes of intelligence and deſign, I needed all my ſceptical and metaphyſical ſubtilty to elude your graſp. In many views of the univerſe, and of its parts, particularly the latter, the beauty and fitneſs of final cauſes ſtrike us with ſuch irreſiſtible force, that all objections appear (what I believe they really are) mere cavils and ſophiſms; nor can we then imagine how it was ever poſſible for us to repoſe any weight on them. But there is no view of human life, or of the condition of mankind, from which, without the greateſt violence, we can infer the moral attributes, or learn that infinite benevolence, conjoined with infinite power and infinite wiſdom, which we muſt diſcover by the eyes of faith alone. It is your turn now to tug the laboring oar, and to ſupport your philoſophical ſubtilties againſt the dictates of plain reaſon and experience.

PART XI.

I SCRUPLE not to allow, ſaid Cleanthes, that I have been apt to ſuſpect the frequent repetition of the word *infinite*, which we meet with in all theological writers, to ſavour more of panegyric than of philoſophy; and that any purpoſes of reaſoning, and even of religion, would be better ſerved, were we to reſt contented with more accurate and more moderate expreſſions. The terms, *admirable*, *excellent*, *ſuperlatively great*, *wiſe*, and *holy*; theſe ſufficiently fill the imaginations of men; and any thing beyond, beſides that it leads into abſurdities, has no influence on the affections or ſentiments. Thus, in the preſent ſubject, if we abandon all human analogy, as ſeems your intention, Demea, I am afraid we abandon all religion, and retain no conception of the great object of our adoration. If we preſerve human analogy, we muſt for ever find it impoſſible to reconcile any mixture of evil in the univerſe with infinite attributes; much leſs can we ever prove the latter from the former. But ſuppoſing the Author of Nature to be finitely perfect, though far exceeding mankind; a ſatisfactory account may then be given of natural and moral evil, and every untoward phenomenon be explained and adjuſted. A leſs evil may then be choſen, in order to avoid a greater: inconveniences be ſubmitted to, in order to reach a deſirable end: And in a word, benevolence, regulated by wiſdom, and limited by neceſſity, may

produce juſt ſuch a world as the preſent. You, Philo, who are ſo prompt at ſtarting views, and reflections, and analogies; I would gladly hear, at length, without interruption, your opinion of this new theory; and if it deſerve our attention, we may afterwards; at more leiſure, reduce it into form.

My ſentiments, replied Philo, are not worth being made a myſtery of; and therefore, without any ceremony, I ſhall deliver what occurs to me with regard to the preſent ſubject. It muſt, I think, be allowed, that if a very limited intelligence, whom we ſhall ſuppoſe utterly unacquainted with the univerſe, were aſſured, that it were the production of a very good, wiſe, and powerful Being, however finite, he would, from his conjectures, form *beforehand* a different notion of it from what we find it to be by experience; nor would he ever imagine, merely from theſe attributes of the cauſe of which he is informed, that the effect could be ſo full of vice and miſery and diſorder, as it appears in this life. Suppoſing now that this perſon were brought into the world, ſtill aſſured that it was the workmanſhip of ſuch a ſublime and benevolent Being; he might, perhaps, be ſurpriſed at the diſappointment, but would never retract his former belief, if founded on any very ſolid argument; ſince ſuch a limited intelligence muſt be ſenſible of his own blindneſs and ignorance, and muſt allow that there may be many ſolutions of thoſe phenomena, which will for ever eſcape his comprehenſion. But ſuppoſing, which is the real cauſe with regard to man, that this creature is not antecedently convinced of a

ſupreme intelligence, benevolent and powerful, but is left to gather ſuch a belief from the appearances of things; this entirely alters the caſe; nor will he ever find any reaſon for ſuch a concluſion. He may be fully convinced of the narrow limits of his underſtanding; but this will not help him in forming an inference concerning the goodneſs of ſuperior powers, ſince he muſt form that inference from what he knows, not from what he is ignorant of. The more you exaggerate his weakneſs and ignorance, the more diffident you render him, and give him the greater ſuſpicion that ſuch ſubjects are beyond the reach of his faculties. You are obliged, therefore, to reaſon with him merely from the known phenomena, and to drop every arbitrary ſuppoſition or conjecture.

Did I ſhow you a houſe or palace, where there was not one apartment convenient or agreeable; where the windows, doors, fires, paſſages, ſtairs, and the whole economy of the building, were the ſource of noiſe, confuſion, fatigue, darkneſs, and the extremes of heat and cold; you would certainly blame the contrivance, without any farther examination. The architect would in vain diſplay his ſubtilty, and prove to you, that if this door or that window were altered, greater ills would enſue. What he ſays may be ſtrictly true: The alteration of one particular, while the other parts of the building remain, may only augment the inconveniences. But ſtill you would aſſert in general, that, if the architect had had ſkill and good intentions, he might have formed ſuch a plan of the whole, and might have adjuſted the parts in ſuch a manner, as would have remedied

all or moſt of theſe inconveniences. His ignorance, or even your own ignorance, of ſuch a plan, will never convince you of the impoſſibility of it. If you find many inconveniences and deformities in the building, you will always, without entering into any detail, condemn the architect.

In ſhort, I repeat the queſtion: Is the world, conſidered in general, and as it appears to us in this life, different from what a man, or ſuch a limited being, would, *before-hand*, expect from a very powerful, wiſe, and benevolent Deity? It muſt be ſtrange prejudice to aſſert the contrary. And from thence I conclude, that, however conſiſtent the world may be, allowing certain ſuppoſitions and conjectures, with the idea of ſuch a Deity, it can never afford us an inference concerning his exiſtence. The conſiſtence is not abſolutely denied, only the inference. Conjectures, eſpecially where infinity is excluded from the divine attributes, may, perhaps, be ſufficient to prove a conſiſtence; but can never be foundations for any inference.

There ſeem to be *four* circumſtances, on which depend all, or the greateſt part of the ills, that moleſt ſenſible creatures; and it is not impoſſible but all theſe circumſtances may be neceſſary and unavoidable. We know ſo little beyond common life, or even of common life, that, with regard to the economy of a univerſe, there is no conjecture, however wild, which may not be juſt; nor any one, however plauſible, which may not be erroneous. All that belongs to human underſtanding, in this deep ignorance and obſcurity, is to be ſceptical, or at leaſt

cautious; and not to admit of any hypotheſis whatever: much leſs, of any which is ſupported by no appearance of probability. Now this I aſſert to be the caſe with regard to all the cauſes of evil, and the circumſtances on which it depends. None of them appear to human reaſon, in the leaſt degree, neceſſary or unavoidable; nor can we ſuppoſe them ſuch, without the utmoſt licence of imagination.

The *firſt* circumſtance which introduces evil, is that contrivance or economy of the animal creation, by which pains, as well as pleaſures, are employed to excite all creatures to action, and make them vigilant in the great work of ſelf-preſervation. Now pleaſure alone, in its various degrees, ſeems to human underſtanding ſufficient for this purpoſe. All animals might be conſtantly in a ſtate of enjoyment; but when urged by any of the neceſſities of nature, ſuch as thirſt, hunger, wearineſs; inſtead of pain, they might feel a diminution of pleaſure, by which they might be prompted to ſeek that object which is neceſſary to their ſubſiſtence. Men purſue pleaſure as eagerly as they avoid pain; at leaſt, might have been ſo conſtituted. It ſeems therefore, plainly poſſible to carry on the buſineſs of life without any pain. Why then is any animal ever rendered ſuſceptible of ſuch a ſenſation? If animals can be free from it an hour, they might enjoy a perpetual exemption from it; and it required as particular a contrivance of their organs to produce that feeling, as to endow them with ſight, hearing, or any of the ſenſes. Shall we conjecture, that ſuch a contrivance was neceſſary, without any appearance of reaſon? and ſhall

we build on that conjecture, as on the moſt certain truth?.

But a capacity of pain would not alone produce pain, were it not for the *ſecond* circumſtance, *viz.* the conducting of the world by general laws; and this ſeems nowiſe neceſſary to a very perfect Being. It is true, if every thing were conducted by particular volitions, the courſe of nature would be perpetually broken, and no man could employ his reaſon in the conduct of life. But might no other particular volitions remedy this inconvenience? In ſhort, might not the Deity exterminate all ill, wherever it were to be found; and produce all good, without any preparation or long progreſs of cauſes and effects?

Beſides, we muſt conſider, that, according to the preſent economy of the world, the courſe of Nature, though ſuppoſed exactly regular, yet to us appears not ſo, and many events are uncertain, and many diſappoint our expectations. Health and ſickneſs, calm and tempeſt, with an infinite number of other accidents, whoſe cauſes are unknown and variable, have a great influence both on the fortunes of particular perſons and on the proſperity of public ſocieties: and indeed all human life, in a manner, depends on ſuch accidents. A being, therefore, who knows the ſecret ſprings of the univerſe, might eaſily, by particular volitions, turn all theſe accidents to the good of mankind, and render the whole world happy, without diſcovering himſelf in any operation. A fleet, whoſe purpoſes were ſalutary to ſociety, might always meet with a fair wind: Good princes enjoy ſound health and long life: Perſons born to

power and authority, be framed with good tempers and virtuous diſpoſitions. A few ſuch events as theſe, regularly and wiſely conducted, would change the face of the world; and yet would no more ſeem to diſturb the courſe of nature, or confound human conduct, than the preſent economy of things, where the cauſes are ſecret, and variable, and compounded. Some ſmall touches, given to Caligula's brain in his infancy, might have converted him into a Trajan: one wave, a little higher than the reſt, by burying Cæſar and his fortune in the bottom of the ocean, might have reſtored liberty to a conſiderable part of mankind. There may, for aught we know, be good reaſons, why Providence interpoſes not in this manner; but they are unknown to us: and though the mere ſuppoſition, that ſuch reaſons exiſt, may be ſufficient to *ſave* the concluſion concerning the divine attributes, yet ſurely it can never be ſufficient to *eſtabliſh* that concluſion.

If every thing in the univerſe be conducted by general laws, and if animals be rendered ſuſceptible of pain, it ſcarcely ſeems poſſible but ſome ill muſt ariſe in the various ſhocks of matter, and the various concurrence and oppoſition of general laws: But this ill would be very rare, were it not for the *third* circumſtance, which I propoſed to mention, *viz.* the great frugality with which all powers and faculties are diſtributed to every particular being. So well adjuſted are the organs and capacities of all animals, and ſo well fitted to their preſervation, that, as far as hiſtory or tradition reaches, there appears not to be any ſingle ſpecies which has yet been extinguiſhed

in the univerſe. Every animal has the requiſite endowments; but theſe endowments are beſtowed with ſo ſcrupulous an economy, that any conſiderable diminution muſt entirely deſtroy the creature. Wherever one power is increaſed, there is a proportional abatement in the others. Animals which excel in ſwiftneſs, are commonly defective in force. Thoſe which poſſeſs both, are either imperfect in ſome of their ſenſes, or are oppreſſed with the moſt craving wants. The human ſpecies, whoſe chief excellency is reaſon and ſagacity, is of all others the moſt neceſſitous, and the moſt deficient in bodily advantages; without clothes, without arms, without food, without lodging, without any convenience of life, except what they owe to their own ſkill and induſtry. In ſhort, Nature ſeems to have formed an exact calculation of the neceſſities of her creatures; and, like a *rigid maſter*, has afforded them little more powers or endowments than what are ſtrictly ſufficient to ſupply thoſe neceſſities. An *indulgent parent* would have beſtowed a large ſtock, in order to guard againſt accidents, and ſecure the happineſs and welfare of the creature in the moſt unfortunate concurrence of circumſtances. Every courſe of life would not have been ſo ſurrounded with precipices, that the leaſt departure from the true path, by miſtake or neceſſity, muſt involve us in miſery and ruin. Some reſerve, ſome fund, would have been provided to enſure happineſs; nor would the powers and the neceſſities have been adjuſted with ſo rigid an economy. The Author of nature is inconceivably powerful: his force is ſuppoſed great, if not altogether

inexhauſtible: nor is there any reaſon, as far as we can judge, to make him obſerve this ſtrict frugality in his dealings with his creatures. It would have been better, were his power extremely limited, to have created fewer animals, and to have endowed theſe with more faculties for their happineſs and preſervation. A builder is never eſteemed prudent, who undertakes a plan beyond what his ſtock will enable him to finiſh.

In order to cure moſt of the ills of human life, I require not that man ſhould have the wings of the eagle, the ſwiftneſs of the ſtag, the force of the ox, the arms of the lion, the ſcales of the crocodile or rhinoceros; much leſs do I demand the ſagacity of an angel or cherubim. I am contented to take an increaſe in one ſingle power or faculty of his ſoul. Let him be endowed with a greater propenſity to induſtry and labor; a more vigorous ſpring and activity of mind; a more conſtant bent to buſineſs and application. Let the whole ſpecies poſſeſs naturally an equal diligence with that which many individuals are able to attain by habit and reflection; and the moſt beneficial conſequences, without any allay of ill, is the immediate and neceſſary reſult of this endowment. Almoſt all the moral, as well as natural, evils of human life ariſe from idleneſs; and were our ſpecies, by the original conſtitution of their frame, exempt from this vice or infirmity, the perfect cultivation of land, the improvement of arts and manufactures, the exact execution of every office and duty, immediately follow; and men at once may fully reach that ſtate of ſociety, which is ſo imperfectly

attained by the beſt-regulated government. But as induſtry is a power, and the moſt valuable of any, Nature ſeems determined, ſuitably to her uſual maxims, to beſtow it on man with a very ſparing hand; and rather to puniſh him ſeverely for his deficiency in it, than to reward him for his attainments. She has ſo contrived his frame, that nothing but the moſt violent neceſſity can oblige him to labor; and ſhe employs all his other wants to overcome, at leaſt in part, the want of diligence, and to endow him with ſome ſhare of a faculty, of which ſhe has thought fit naturally to bereave him. Here our demands may be allowed very humble, and therefore the more reaſonable. If we required the endowments of ſuperior penetration and judgment, of a more delicate taſte of beauty, of nicer ſenſibility to benevolence and friendſhip; we might be told, that we impiouſly pretend to break the order of Nature; that we want to exalt ourſelves into a higher rank of being; that the preſents which we require, not being ſuitable to our ſtate and condition, would only be pernicious to us. But it is hard; I dare to repeat it, it is hard, that being placed in a world ſo full of wants and neceſſities, where almoſt every being and element is either our foe or refuſes its aſſiſtance — we ſhould alſo have our own temper to ſtruggle with, and ſhould be deprived of that faculty which can alone fence againſt theſe multiplied evils.

The *fourth* circumſtance, whence ariſes the miſery and ill of the univerſe, is the inaccurate workmanſhip of all the ſprings and principles of the great machine of nature. It muſt be acknowledged, that there

there are few parts of the univerſe which ſeem not to ſerve ſome purpoſe, and whoſe removal would not produce a viſible defect and diſorder in the whole. The parts hang all together; nor can one be touched without affecting the reſt, in a greater or leſs degree. But at the ſame time, it muſt be obſerved, that none of theſe parts or principles, however uſeful, are ſo accurately adjuſted, as to keep preciſely within thoſe bounds in which their utility conſiſts; but they are all of them apt, on every occaſion, to run into the one extreme or the other. One would imagine, that this grand production had not received the laſt hand of the maker; ſo little finiſhed is every part, and ſo coarſe are the ſtrokes with which it is executed. Thus, the winds are requiſite to convey the vapors along the ſurface of the globe, and to aſſiſt men in navigation: but how oft, riſing up to tempeſts and hurricanes, do they become pernicious? Rains are neceſſary to nouriſh all the plants and animals of the earth: but how often are they defective? how often exceſſive? Heat is requiſite to all life and vegetation; but is not always found in the due proportion. On the mixture and ſecretion of the humors and juices of the body depend the health and proſperity of the animal: but the parts perform not regularly their proper function. What more uſeful than all the paſſions of the mind, ambition, vanity, love, anger? But how oft do they break their bounds, and cauſe the greateſt convulſions in ſociety? There is nothing ſo advantageous in the univerſe, but what frequently becomes pernicious, by its exceſs or defect? nor has Nature guarded, with the requiſite accuracy, againſt

all diſorder or confuſion. The irregularity is never, perhaps, ſo great as to deſtroy any ſpecies; but is often ſufficient to involve the individuals in ruin and miſery.

On the concurrence, then, of theſe *four* circumſtances, does all or the greateſt part of natural evil depend. Were all living creatures incapable of pain, or were the world adminiſtered by particular volitions, evil never could have found acceſs into the univerſe: and were animals endowed with a large ſtock of powers and faculties, beyond what ſtrict neceſſity requires; or were the ſeveral ſprings and principles of the univerſe ſo accurately framed as to preſerve always the juſt temperament and medium; there muſt have been very little ill in compariſon of what we feel at preſent. What then ſhall we pronounce on this occaſion? Shall we ſay, that theſe circumſtances are not neceſſary, and that they might eaſily have been altered in the contrivance of the univerſe? This deciſion ſeems too preſumptuous for creatures ſo blind and ignorant. Let us be more modeſt in our concluſions. Let us allow, that, if the goodneſs of the Deity (I mean a goodneſs like the human) could be eſtabliſhed on any tolerable reaſons *à priori*, theſe phenomena, however untoward, would not be ſufficient to ſubvert that principle; but might eaſily, in ſome unknown manner, be reconcileable to it. But let us ſtill aſſert, that as this goodneſs is not antecedently eſtabliſhed, but muſt be inferred from the phenomena, there can be no grounds for ſuch an inference, while there are ſo many ills in the univerſe, and while theſe ills might ſo eaſily

have been remedied, as far as human underſtanding can be allowed to judge on ſuch a ſubject. I am Sceptic enough to allow, that the bad appearances, notwithſtanding all my reaſonings, may be compatible with ſuch attributes as you ſuppoſe: But ſurely they can never prove theſe attributes. Such a concluſion cannot reſult from Scepticiſm; but muſt ariſe from the phenomena, and from our confidence in the reaſonings which we deduce from theſe phenomena.

Look round this univerſe. What an immenſe profuſion of beings, animated and organized, ſenſible and active! You admire this prodigious variety and fecundity. But inſpect a little more narrowly theſe living exiſtences, the only beings worth regarding. How hoſtile and deſtructive to each other! How inſufficient all of them for their own happineſs! How contemptible or odious to the ſpectator! The whole preſents nothing but the idea of a blind Nature, impregnated by a great vivifying principle, and pouring forth from her lap, without diſcernment or parental care, her maimed and abortive children.

Here the Manichæan ſyſtem occurs as a proper hypotheſis to ſolve the difficulty: and no doubt in ſome reſpects, it is very ſpecious, and has more probability than the common hypotheſis, by giving a plauſible account of the ſtrange mixture of good and ill which appears in life. But if we conſider, on the other hand, the perfect uniformity and agreement of the parts of the univerſe, we ſhall not diſcover in it any marks of the combat of a malevolent with a benevolent being. There is indeed an oppoſition of pains and pleaſures in the feelings of ſenſible

creatures: but are not all the operations of Nature carried on by an oppoſition of principles, of hot and cold, moiſt and dry, light and heavy? The true concluſion is, that the original Source of all things is entirely indifferent to all theſe principles; and has no more regard to good above ill, than to heat above cold, or to drought above moiſture, or to light above heavy.

There may *four* hypotheſes be framed concerning the firſt cauſes of the univerſe: *that* they are endowed with perfect goodneſs; *that* they have perfect malice; *that* they are oppoſite, and have both goodneſs and malice; that they have neither goodneſs nor malice. Mixt phenomena can never prove the two former unmixt principles. And the uniformity and ſteadineſs of general laws ſeem to oppoſe the third. The fourth, therefore, ſeems by far the moſt probable.

What I have ſaid concerning natural evil will apply to moral, with little or no variation; and we have no more reaſon to infer, that the rectitude of the Supreme Being reſembles human rectitude than that his benevolence reſembles the human. Nay, it will be thought, that we have ſtill greater cauſe to exclude from him moral ſentiments, ſuch as we feel them; ſince moral evil, in the opinion of many, is much more predominant above moral good than natural evil above natural good.

But even though this ſhould not be allowed; and though the virtue, which is in mankind, ſhould be acknowledged much ſuperior to the vice; yet ſo long as there is any vice at all in the univerſe, it will very much puzzle you Anthropomorphites how

to account for it. You muſt aſſign a cauſe for it, without having recourſe to the firſt cauſe. But as every effect muſt have a cauſe, and that cauſe another, you muſt either carry on the progreſſion *in infinitum*, or reſt on that original principle, who is the ultimate cauſe of all things.....

Hold! Hold! cried Demea: Whither does your imagination hurry you? I join in alliance with you, in order to prove the incomprehenſible nature of the Divine being, and refute the principles of Cleanthes, who would meaſure every thing to a human rule and ſtandard. But I now find you running into all the topics of the greateſt libertines and infidels; and betraying that holy cauſe which you ſeemingly eſpouſed. Are you ſecretly, then, a more dangerous enemy than Cleanthes himſelf?

And are you ſo late in perceiving it? replied Cleanthes. Believe me, Demea, your friend Philo, from the beginning, has been amuſing himſelf at both our expenſe; and it muſt be confeſſed, that the injudicious reaſoning of our vulgar theology has given him but too juſt a handle of ridicule. The total infirmity of human reaſon, the abſolute incomprehenſibility of the Divine Nature, the great and univerſal miſery and ſtill greater wickedneſs of men; there are ſtrange topics, ſurely, to be ſo fondly cheriſhed by orthodox divines and doctors. In ages of ſtupidity and ignorance, indeed, theſe principles may ſafely be eſpouſed, and, perhaps, no views of things are more proper to promote ſuperſtition, than ſuch as encourage the blind amazement, the diffidence, and melancholy of mankind. But at preſent.....

Blame not ſo much, interpoſed Philo, the ignorance of theſe reverend gentlemen. They know how to change their ſtyle with the times. Formerly it was a moſt popular theological topic to maintain, that human life was vanity and miſery, and to exaggerate all the ills and pains which are incident to men: But of late years, divines, we find, begin to retract this poſition; and maintain, though ſtill with ſome heſitation, that there are more goods than evils, more pleaſures than pains, even in this life. When religion ſtood entirely upon temper and education, it was thought proper to encourage melancholy; as, indeed, mankind never have recourſe to ſuperior powers ſo readily as in that diſpoſition. But as men have now learned to form principles, and to draw conſequences, it is neceſſary to change the batteries, and to make uſe of ſuch arguments as will endure at leaſt ſome ſcrutiny and examination. This variation is the ſame (and from the ſame cauſes) with which I formerly remarked with regard to Scepticiſm.

Thus Philo continued to the laſt his ſpirit of oppoſition, and his cenſures of eſtabliſhed opinions. But I could obſerve, that Demea did not at all reliſh the latter part of the diſcourſe; and he took occaſion ſoon after, on ſome pretence or other, to leave the company.

PART XII.

AFTER Demea's departure, Cleanthes and Philo continued the converſation in the following manner. Our friend, I am afraid, ſaid Cleanthes, will have little inclination to revive this topic of diſcourſe while you are in company; and to tell truth, Philo, I ſhould rather wiſh to reaſon with either of you apart on a ſubject ſo ſublime and intereſting. Your ſpirit of controverſy, joined to your abhorrence of vulgar ſuperſtition, carries you ſtrange lengths when engaged in an argument; and there is nothing ſo ſacred and venerable, even in your own eyes, which you ſpare on that occaſion.

I muſt confeſs, replied Philo, that I am leſs cautious on the ſubject of Natural Religion than on any other; both becauſe I know that I can never, on that head, corrupt the principles of any man of common ſenſe; and becauſe no one, I am confident, in whoſe eyes I appear a man of common ſenſe, will ever miſtake my intentions. You in particular, Cleanthes, with whom I live in unreſerved intimacy; you are ſenſible, that, notwithſtanding the freedom of my converſation, and my love of ſingular arguments, no one has a deeper ſenſe of religion impreſſed on his mind, or pays more profound adoration to the Divine Being, as he diſcovers himſelf to reaſon, in the inexplicable contrivance and artifice of Nature. A purpoſe, an intention, a deſign, ſtrikes every where the moſt careleſs, the moſt ſtupid thinker;

and no man can be ſo hardened in abſurd ſyſtems, as at all times to reject it. *That Nature does nothing in vain*, is a maxim eſtabliſhed in all the ſchools, merely from the contemplation of the works of Nature, without any religious purpoſe; and, from a firm conviction of its truth, an anatomiſt, who had obſerved a new organ or canal, would never be ſatisfied till he had alſo diſcovered its uſe and intention. One great foundation of the Copernican ſyſtem is the maxim, *That nature acts by the ſimpleſt methods, and chuſes the moſt proper means to any end;* and aſtronomers often, without thinking of it, lay this ſtrong foundation of piety and religion. The ſame thing is obſervable in other parts of philoſophy: And thus all the ſciences almoſt lead us inſenſibly to acknowledge a firſt intelligent Author; and their authority is often ſo much the greater, as they do not directly profeſs that intention.

It is with pleaſure I hear Galen reaſon concerning the ſtructure of the human body. The anatomy of a man, ſays he [19], diſcovers above 600 different muſcles; and whoever duly conſiders theſe, will find, that in each of them Nature muſt have adjuſted at leaſt ten different circumſtances, in order to attain the end which ſhe propoſed; proper figure, juſt magnitude, right diſpoſition of the ſeveral ends, upper and lower poſition of the whole, the due inſertion of the ſeveral nerves, veins, and arteries: So that, in the muſcles alone, above 6000 ſeveral views and intentions muſt have been formed and executed. The

[19] De formatione fœtûs.

bones he calculates to be 284: The diſtinct purpoſes, aimed at in the ſtructure of each, above forty. What a prodigious diſplay of artifice, even in theſe ſimple and homogeneous parts? But if we conſider the ſkin, ligaments, veſſels, glandules, humors, the ſeveral limbs and members of the body; how muſt our aſtoniſhment riſe upon us, in proportion to the number and intricacy of the parts ſo artificially adjuſted? The farther we advance in theſe reſearches, we diſcover new ſcenes of art and wiſdom: But deſcry ſtill, at a diſtance, farther ſcenes beyond our reach; in the fine internal ſtructure of the parts, in the economy of the brain, in the fabric of the ſeminal veſſels. All theſe artifices are repeated in every different ſpecies of animal, with wonderful variety, and with exact propriety, ſuited to the different intentions of Nature in framing each ſpecies. And if the infidelity of Galen, even when theſe natural ſciences were ſtill imperfect, could not withſtand ſuch ſtriking appearances? to what pitch of pertinacious obſtinacy muſt a philoſopher in this age have attained, who can now doubt of a Supreme Intelligence?

Could I meet with one of this ſpecies (who, I thank God, are very rare), I would aſk him, Suppoſing there were a God, who did not diſcover himſelf immediately to our ſenſes; were it poſſible for him to give ſtronger proofs of his exiſtence, than what appear on the whole face of Nature? What indeed could ſuch a Divine Being do, but copy the preſent economy of things; render many of his artifices ſo plain, that no ſtupidity could miſtake them; afford glimpſes of ſtill greater artifices, which

demonſtrate his prodigious ſuperiority above our narrow apprehenſions; and conceal altogether a great many from ſuch imperfect creatures? Now, according to all rules of juſt reaſoning, every fact muſt paſs for undiſputed, when it is ſupported by all the arguments which its nature admits of; even though theſe arguments be not, in themſelves, very numerous or forcible: How much more, in the preſent caſe, where no human imagination can compute their number, and no underſtanding eſtimate their cogency?

I ſhall farther add, ſaid Cleanthes, to what you have ſo well urged, that one great advantage of the principle of Theiſm is, that it is the only ſyſtem of coſmogony which can be rendered intelligible and complete, and yet can throughout preſerve a ſtrong analogy to what we every day ſee and experience in the world. The compariſon of the univerſe to a machine of human contrivance is ſo obvious and natural, and is juſtified by ſo many inſtances of order and deſign in nature, that it muſt immediately ſtrike all unprejudiced apprehenſions, and procure univerſal approbation. Whoever attempts to weaken this theory, cannot pretend to ſucceed by eſtabliſhing in its place any other that is preciſe and determinate: It is ſufficient for him, if he ſtart doubts and difficulties; and by remote and abſtract views of things, reach that ſuſpenſe of judgment, which is here the utmoſt boundary of his wiſhes. But beſides that this ſtate of mind is in itſelf unſatisfactory, it can never be ſteadily maintained againſt ſuch ſtriking appearances as continually engage us into the religious hypotheſis. A falſe, abſurd ſyſtem, human nature,

from the force of prejudice, is capable of adhering to with obſtinacy and perſeverance: But no ſyſtem at all, in oppoſition to a theory ſupported by ſtrong and obvious reaſon, by natural propenſity, and by early education, I think it abſolutely impoſſible to maintain or defend.

So little, replied Philo, do I eſteem this ſuſpenſe of judgment in the preſent caſe to be poſſible, that I am apt to ſuſpect there enters ſomewhat of a diſpute of words into this controverſy, more than is uſually imagined. That the works of Nature bear a great analogy to the productions of art, is evident; and according to all the rules of good reaſoning, we ought to infer, if we argue at all concerning them, that their cauſes have a proportional analogy. But as there are alſo conſiderable differences, we have reaſon to ſuppoſe a proportional difference in the cauſes; and in particular ought to attribute a much higher degree of power and energy to the ſupreme cauſe than any we have ever obſerved in mankind. Here then the exiſtence of a Deity is plainly aſcertained by reaſon: and if we make it a queſtion, whether, on account of theſe analogies, we can properly call him a *mind* or *intelligence*, notwithſtanding the vaſt difference which may reaſonably be ſuppoſed between him and human minds; what is this but a mere verbal controverſy? No man can deny the analogies between the effects: To reſtrain ourſelves from inquiring concerning the cauſes, is ſcarcely poſſible: From this inquiry, the legitimate concluſion is, that the cauſes have alſo an analogy: And if we are not contented with calling the firſt and ſupreme

cauſe a God or Deity, but deſire to vary the expreſſion; what can we call him but Mind or Thought, to which he is juſtly ſuppoſed to bear a conſiderable reſemblance?

All men of ſound reaſon are diſguſted with verbal diſputes, which abound ſo much in philoſophical and theological inquiries; and it is found, that the only remedy for this abuſe muſt ariſe from clear definitions, from the preciſion of thoſe ideas which enter into any argument, and from the ſtrict and uniform uſe of thoſe terms which are employed. But there is a ſpecies of controverſy which, from the very nature of language and of human ideas, is involved in perpetual ambiguity, and can never, by any precaution or any definitions, be able to reach a reaſonable certainty or preciſion. Theſe are the controverſies concerning the degrees of any quality or circumſtance. Men may argue to all eternity, whether Hannibal be a great, or a very great, or a ſuperlatively great man; what degree of beauty Cleopatra poſſeſſed; what epithet of praiſe Livy or Thucidydes is entitled to; without bringing the controverſy to any determination. The diſputants may here agree in their ſenſe, and differ in the terms, or *vice verſa*: yet never be able to define their terms, ſo as to enter into each other's meaning: Becauſe the degrees of theſe qualities are not, like quantity or number, ſuſceptible of any exact menſuration, which may be the ſtandard in the controverſy. That the diſpute concerning Theiſm is of this nature, and conſequently is merely verbal, or perhaps, if poſſible, ſtill more incurably ambiguous, will appear upon

the ſlighteſt inquiry. I aſk the Theiſt, if he does not allow, that there is a great and immeaſurable, becauſe incomprehenſible, difference between the *human* and the *divine* mind? The more pious he is, the more readily will he aſſent to the affirmative, and the more will he be diſpoſed to magnify the difference: He will even aſſert, that the difference is of a nature which cannot be too much magnified. I next turn to the Atheiſt, who, I aſſert, is only nominally ſo, and can never poſſibly be in earneſt; and I aſk him, whether, from the coherence and apparent ſympathy in all the parts of this world, there be not a certain degree of analogy among all the operations of Nature, in every ſituation and in every age? whether the rotting of a turnip, the generation of an animal, and the ſtructure of human thought, be not energies that probably bear ſome remote analogy to each other? It is impoſſible he can deny it: He will readily acknowledge it. Having obtained this conceſſion, I puſh him ſtill farther in his retreat; and I aſk him, if it be not probable, that the principle which firſt arranged, and ſtill maintains, order in this univerſe, bears not alſo ſome remote inconceivable analogy to the other operations of Nature, and among the reſt to the economy of human mind and thought? However reluctant, he muſt give his aſſent. Where then cry I to both theſe antagoniſts, is the ſubject of your diſpute? The Theiſt allows, that the original intelligence is very different from human reaſon: The Atheiſt allows, that the original principle of order bears ſome remote analogy to it. Will you quarrel,

Gentlemen, about the degrees, and enter into a controverſy, which admits not of any preciſe meaning, nor conſequently of any determination? If you ſhould be ſo obſtinate, I ſhould not be ſurpriſed to find you inſenſibly change ſides; while the Theiſt, on the one hand, exaggerates the diſſimilarity between the ſupreme Being, and frail, imperfect, variable, fleeting, and mortal creatures; and the Atheiſt, on the other, magnifies the analogy among all the operations of Nature, in every period, every ſituation, and every poſition. Conſider then, where the real point of controverſy lies; and if you cannot lay aſide your diſputes, endeavour at leaſt to cure yourſelves of your animoſity.

And here I muſt alſo acknowledge, Cleanthes, that as the works of Nature have a much greater analogy to the effects of *our* art and contrivance, than to thoſe of *our* benevolence and juſtice; we have reaſon to infer, that the natural attributes of the Deity have a greater reſemblance to thoſe of men, than his moral have to human virtues. But what is the conſequence? Nothing but this, that the moral qualities of man are more defective in their kind than his natural abilities. For as the Supreme Being is allowed to be abſolutely and entirely perfect, whatever differs moſt from him, departs the fartheſt from the ſupreme ſtandard of rectitude and perfection [11].

[11] It ſeems evident, that the diſpute between the Sceptics and Dogmatiſts is entirely verbal; or at leaſt regards only the degrees of doubt and aſſurance, which we ought to indulge with regard to all reaſoning: And ſuch diſputes are commonly, at the bottom, verbal, and admit not of any preciſe

These, Cleanthes, are my unfeigned sentiments on this subject; and these sentiments, you know, I have ever cherished and maintained. But in proportion to my veneration for true religion, is my abhorrence of vulgar superstitions; and I indulge a peculiar pleasure, I confess, in pushing such principles, sometimes into absurdity, sometimes into impiety. And you are sensible, that all bigots, notwithstanding their great aversion to the latter above the former, are commonly equally guilty of both.

My inclination, replied Cleanthes, lies, I own, a contrary way. Religion, however corrupted, is still better than no religion at all. The doctrine of a future state is so strong and necessary a security to morals, that we never ought to abandon or neglect it. For if finite and temporary rewards and punishments have so great an effect, as we daily find; how much greater must be expected from such as are infinite and eternal?

determination. No philosophical Dogmatist denies, that there are difficulties both with regard to the senses and to all science; and that these difficulties are in a regular, logical method, absolutely insolvable. No Sceptic denies that we lie under an absolute necessity, notwithstanding these difficulties, of thinking, and believing, and reasoning, with regard to all kinds of subjects, and even of frequently assenting with confidence and security. The only difference, then, between these sects, if they merit that name, is, that the Sceptic, from habit, caprice, or inclination insists most on the difficulties; the Dogmatist, for like reasons, on the necessity.

How happens it then, ſaid Philo, if vulgar ſuperſtition be ſo ſalutary to ſociety, that all hiſtory abounds ſo much with accounts of its pernicious conſequences on public affairs? Factions, civil wars, perſecutions, ſubverſions of government, oppreſſion, ſlavery, theſe are the diſmal conſequences which always attend its prevalency over the minds of men. If the religious ſpirit be ever mentioned in any hiſtorical narration, we are ſure to meet afterwards with a detail of the miſeries which attend it. And no period of time can be happier or more proſperous than thoſe in which it is never regarded or heard of.

The reaſon of this obſervation, replied Cleanthes, is obvious. The proper office of religion is to regulate the heart of men, humanize their conduct, infuſe the ſpirit of temperance, order, and obedience; and as its operation is ſilent, and only enforces the motives of morality and juſtice, it is in danger of being overlooked, and confounded with theſe other motives. When it diſtinguiſhes itſelf, and acts as a ſeparate principle over men, it has departed from its proper ſphere, and has become only a cover to faction and ambition.

And ſo will all religion, ſaid Philo, except the philoſophical and rational kind. Your reaſonings are more eaſily eluded than my facts. The inference is not juſt, becauſe finite and temporary rewards and puniſhments have ſo great influence, that therefore ſuch as are infinite and eternal muſt have ſo much greater. Conſider, I beſeech you, the attachment which we have to preſent things, and the little concern which we diſcover for objects ſo remote and uncertain.

uncertain. When divines are declaiming againſt the common behaviour and conduct of the world, they always repreſent this principle as the ſtrongeſt imaginable (which indeed it is); and deſcribe almoſt all human kind as lying under the influence of it, and ſunk into the deepeſt lethargy and unconcern about their religious intereſts. Yet theſe ſame divines, when they refute their ſpeculative antagoniſts, ſuppoſe the motives of religion to be ſo powerful, that, without them, it were impoſſible for civil ſociety to ſubſiſt; nor are they aſhamed of ſo palpable a contradiction. It is certain, from experience, that the ſmalleſt grain of natural honeſty and benevolence has more effect on men's conduct, than the moſt pompous views ſuggeſted by theological theories and ſyſtems. A man's natural inclination works inceſſantly upon him; it is for ever preſent to the mind; and mingles itſelf with every view and conſideration: whereas religious motives, where they act at all, operate only by ſtarts and bounds; and it is ſcarcely poſſible for them to become altogether habitual to the mind. The force of the greateſt gravity, ſay the philoſophers, is infinitely ſmall, in compariſon of that of the leaſt impulſe: yet it is certain, that the ſmalleſt gravity will, in the end, prevail above a great impulſe; becauſe no ſtrokes or blows can be repeated with ſuch conſtancy as attraction and gravitation.

Another advantage of inclination; it engages on its ſide all the wit and ingenuity of the mind; and when ſet in oppoſition to religious principles, ſeeks every method and art of eluding them: In which it

is almoſt always ſucceſsful. Who can explain the heart of man, or account for thoſe ſtrange ſalvos and excuſes, with which people ſatisfy themſelves, when they follow their inclinations in oppoſition to their religious duty? This is well underſtood in the world; and none but fools ever repoſe leſs truſt in a man, becauſe they hear, that, from ſtudy and philoſophy, he has entertained ſome ſpeculative doubts with regard to theological ſubjects. And when we have to do with a man, who makes a great profeſſion of religion and devotion; has this any other effect upon ſeveral, who paſs for prudent, than to put them on their guard, leſt they be cheated and deceived by him?

We muſt farther conſider, that philoſophers, who cultivate reaſon and reflection, ſtand leſs in need of ſuch motives to keep them under the reſtraint of morals: and that the vulgar, who alone may need them, are utterly incapable of ſo pure a religion as repreſents the Deity to be pleaſed with nothing but virtue in human behaviour. The recommendations to the Divinity are generally ſuppoſed to be either frivolous obſervances, or rapturous ecſtaſies, or a bigotted credulity. We need not run back into antiquity, or wander into remote regions, to find inſtances of this degeneracy. Amongſt ourſelves, ſome have been guilty of that atrociouſneſs, unknown to the Egyptian and Grecian ſuperſtitions, of declaiming, in expreſs terms, againſt morality; and repreſenting it as a ſure forfeiture of the divine favor, if the leaſt truſt or reliance be laid upon it.

But even though ſuperſtition or enthuſiaſm ſhould not put itſelf in direct oppoſition to morality, the very diverting of the attention, the raiſing up a new and frivolous ſpecies of merit, the prepoſterous diſtribution which it makes of praiſe and blame, muſt have the moſt pernicious conſequences, and weaken extremely men's attachment to the natural motives of juſtice and humanity.

Such a principle of action likewiſe, not being any of the familiar motives of human conduct, acts only by intervals on the temper; and muſt be rouſed by continual efforts, in order to render the pious zealot ſatisfied with his own conduct, and make him fulfil his devotional taſk. Many religious exerciſes are entered into with ſeeming fervor, where the heart, at the time, feels cold and languid: A habit of diſſimulation is by degrees contracted; and fraud and falſehood become the predominant principle. Hence the reaſon of that vulgar obſervation, that the higheſt zeal in religion and the deepeſt hypocriſy, ſo far from being inconſiſtent, are often or commonly united in the ſame individual character.

The bad effects of ſuch habits, even in common life, are eaſily imagined: but where the intereſts of religion are concerned, no morality can be forcible enough to bind the enthuſiaſtic zealot. The ſacredneſs of the cauſe ſanctifies every meaſure which can be made uſe of to promote it.

The ſteady attention alone to ſo important an intereſt as that of eternal ſalvation, is apt to extinguiſh the benevolent affections, and beget a narrow, contracted ſelfiſhneſs. And when ſuch a temper is

encouraged, it eaſily eludes all the general precepts of charity and benevolence.

Thus the motives of vulgar ſuperſtition have no great influence on general conduct; nor is their operation very favorable to morality, in the inſtances where they predominate.

Is there any maxim in politics more certain and infallible, than that both the number and authority of prieſts ſhould be confined within very narrow limits; and that the civil magiſtrate ought, for ever, to keep his *faſces* and *axes* from ſuch dangerous hands? But if the ſpirit of popular religion were ſo ſalutary to ſociety, a contrary maxim ought to prevail. The greater number of prieſts, and their greater authority and riches, will always augment the religious ſpirit. And though the prieſts have the guidance of this ſpirit, why may we not expect a ſuperior ſanctity of life, and greater benevolence and moderation, from perſons who are ſet apart for religion, who are continually inculcating it upon others, and who muſt themſelves imbibe a greater ſhare of it? Whence comes it then, that, in fact, the utmoſt a wiſe magiſtrate can propoſe with regard to popular religions, is, as far as poſſible, to make a ſaving game of it, and to prevent their pernicious conſequences with regard to ſociety? Every expedient which he tries for ſo humble a purpoſe is ſurrounded with inconveniences. If he admits only one religion among his ſubjects, he muſt ſacrifice, to an uncertain proſpect of tranquillity, every conſideration of public liberty, ſcience, reaſon, induſtry, and even his own independency. If he gives

indulgence to ſeveral ſects, which is the wiſer maxim, he muſt preſerve a very philoſophical indifference to all of them, and carefully reſtrain the pretenſions of the prevailing ſect; otherwiſe he can expect nothing but endleſs diſputes, quarrels, factions, perſecutions, and civil commotions.

True religion, I allow, has no ſuch pernicious conſequences; but we muſt treat of religion as it has commonly been found in the world; nor have I any thing to do with that ſpeculative tenet of Theiſm; which, as it is a ſpecies of philoſophy, muſt partake of the beneficial influence of that principle, and at the ſame time muſt lie under a like inconvenience, of being always confined to very few perſons.

Oaths are requiſite in all courts of judicature; but it is a queſtion whether their authority ariſes from any popular religion. It is the ſolemnity and importance of the occaſion, the regard to reputation, and the reflecting on the general intereſts of ſociety, which are the chief reſtraints upon mankind. Cuſtom-houſe-oaths and political oaths are but little regarded even by ſome who pretend to principles of honeſty and religion; and a Quaker's aſſeveration is with us juſtly put upon the ſame footing with the oath of any other perſon. I know, that Polybius [12] aſcribes the infamy of Greek faith to the prevalency of the Epicurean philoſophy: but I know alſo, that Punic faith had as bad a reputation in ancient times, as Iriſh evidence has in modern; though we cannot account for theſe vulgar obſervations by the

[12] Lib. vi. cap. 54.

ſame reaſon. Not to mention, that Greek faith was infamous before the riſe of the Epicurean philoſophy; and Euripides[13], in a paſſage which I ſhall point out to you, has glanced a remarkable ſtroke of ſatire againſt his nation, with regard to this circumſtance.

Take care, Philo, replied Cleanthes; take care; puſh not matters too far: allow not your zeal againſt falſe religion to undermine your veneration for the true. Forfeit not this principle, the chief, the only great conſort in life; and our principal ſupport amidſt all the attacks of adverſe fortune. The moſt agreeable reflection, which it is poſſible for human imagination to ſuggeſt, is that of genuine Theiſm, which repreſents us as the workmanſhip of a Being perfectly good, wiſe, and powerful; who created us for happineſs; and who, having implanted in us immeaſurable deſires of good, will prolong our exiſtence to all eternity, and will transfer us into an infinite variety of ſcenes, in order to ſatisfy thoſe deſires, and render our felicity complete and durable. Next to ſuch a Being himſelf (if the compariſon be allowed), the happieſt lot which we can imagine, is that of being under his guardianſhip and protection.

Theſe appearances, ſaid Philo, are moſt engaging and alluring; and with regard to the true philoſopher, they are more than appearances. But it happens here, as in the former caſe, that, with regard to the greater part of mankind, the appearances are deceitful, and that the terrors of religion commonly prevail above its comforts.

[13] Iphigenia in Tauride.

It is allowed, that men never have recourſe to devotion ſo readily as when dejected with grief or depreſſed with ſickneſs. Is not this a proof, that the religious ſpirit is not ſo nearly allied to joy as to ſorrow?

But men, when afflicted, find conſolation in religion, replied Cleanthes. Sometimes, ſaid Philo; but it is natural to imagine, that they will form a notion of thoſe unknown beings, ſuitably to the preſent gloom and melancholy of their temper, when they betake themſelves to the contemplation of them. Accordingly, we find the tremendous images to predominate in all religions; and we ourſelves, after having employed the moſt exalted expreſſion in our deſcriptions of the Deity, fall into the flatteſt contradiction, in affirming, that the damned are infinitely ſuperior in number to the elect.

I ſhall venture to affirm, that there never was a popular religion, which repreſented the ſtate of departed ſouls in ſuch a light, as would render it eligible for human kind, that there ſhould be ſuch a ſtate. Theſe fine models of religion are the mere product of philoſophy. For as death lies between the eye and the proſpect of futurity, that event is ſo ſhocking to nature, that it muſt throw a gloom on all the regions which lie beyond it; and ſuggeſt to the generality of mankind the idea of Cerberus and Furies; devils, and torrents of fire and brimſtone.

It is true, both fear and hope enter into religion; becauſe both theſe paſſions, at different times, agitate the human mind, and each of them forms a ſpecies of divinity ſuitable to itſelf. But when a

man is in a cheerful diſpoſition, he is fit for buſineſs, or company, or entertainment of any kind; and he naturally applies himſelf to theſe, and thinks not of religion. When melancholy and dejected, he has nothing to do but brood upon the terrors of the inviſible world, and to plunge himſelf ſtill deeper in affliction. It may, indeed, happen, that after he has, in this manner, engraved the religious opinions deep into his thought and imagination, there may arrive a change of health or circumſtances, which may reſtore his good-humor, and raiſing cheerful proſpects of futurity, make him run into the other extreme of joy and triumph. But ſtill it muſt be acknowledged, that, as terror is the primary principle of religion, it is the paſſion which always predominates in it, and admits but of ſhort intervals of pleaſure.

Not to mention, that theſe fits of exceſſive, enthuſiaſtic joy, by exhauſting the ſpirits, always prepare the way for equal fits of ſuperſtitious terror and dejection; nor is there any ſtate of mind ſo happy as the calm and equable. But this ſtate it is impoſſible to ſupport, where a man thinks that he lies, in ſuch profound darkneſs and uncertainty, between an eternity of happineſs and an eternity of miſery. No wonder, that ſuch an opinion diſjoints the ordinary frame of the mind, and throws it into the utmoſt confuſion. And though that opinion is ſeldom ſo ſteady in its operation as to influence all the actions, yet is it apt to make a conſiderable breach in the temper, and to produce that gloom and melancholy ſo remarkable in all devout people.

It is contrary to common ſenſe to entertain apprehenſions or terrors upon account of any opinion whatſoever, or to imagine that we run any riſk hereafter by the freeſt uſe of our reaſon. Such a ſentiment implies both an *abſurdity* and an *inconſiſtency*. It is an abſurdity to believe that the Deity has human paſſions, and one of the loweſt of human paſſions, a reſtleſs appetite for applauſe. It is an inconſiſtency to believe, that, ſince the Deity has this human paſſion, he has not others alſo; and in particular a diſregard to the opinions of creatures ſo much inferior.

To know God, ſays Seneca, *is to worſhip him.* All other worſhip is indeed abſurd, ſuperſtitious, and even impious. It degrades him to the low condition of mankind, who are delighted with entreaty, ſolicitation, preſents, and flattery. Yet is this impiety the ſmalleſt of which ſuperſtition is guilty. Commonly, it depreſſes the Deity far below the condition of mankind; and repreſents him as a capricious demon, who exerciſes his power without reaſon, and without humanity! And were that Divine Being diſpoſed to be offended at the vices and follies of ſilly mortals, who are his own workmanſhip, ill would it ſurely fare with the votaries of moſt popular ſuperſtitions. Nor would any of human race merit his *favor*, but a very few, the philoſophical Theiſts, who entertain, or rather indeed endeavour to entertain, ſuitable notions of his divine perfections: As the only perſons, entitled to his *compaſſion* and *indulgence*, would be the philoſophical Sceptics, a ſect almoſt equally rare; who, from a natural diffidence

of their own capacity, ſuſpend, or endeavour to ſuſpend, all judgment with regard to ſuch ſublime and ſuch extraordinary ſubjects.

If the whole of Natural Theology, as ſome people ſeem to maintain, reſolves itſelf into one ſimple, though ſomewhat ambiguous. at leaſt undefined propoſition, *That the cauſe or cauſes of order in the univerſe probably bear ſome remote analogy to human intelligence.* If this propoſition be not capable of extenſion, variation, or more particular explication; if it affords no inference that affects human life, or can be the ſource of any action or forbearance; and if the analogy, imperfect as it is, can be carried no farther than to the human intelligence, and cannot be transferred, with any appearance of probability, to the other qualities of the mind: If this really be the caſe, what can the moſt inquiſitive, contemplative, and religious man do more than give a plain, philoſophical aſſent to the propoſition, as often as it occurs; and believe that the arguments on which it is eſtabliſhed, exceed the objections which lie againſt it? Some aſtoniſhment indeed will naturally ariſe from the greatneſs of the object; ſome melancholy from its obſcurity; ſome contempt of human reaſon, that it can give no ſolution more ſatisfactory with regard to ſo extraordinary and magnificent a queſtion. But believe me, Cleanthes, the moſt natural ſentiment, which a well-diſpoſed mind will feel on this occaſion, is a longing deſire and expectation, that heaven would be pleaſed to diſſipate, at leaſt alleviate, this profound ignorance, by affording ſome more particular revelation to mankind, and making

diſcoveries of the nature, attributes, and operations of the divine object of our faith. A perſon, ſeaſoned with a juſt ſenſe of the imperfections of natural reaſon, will fly to revealed truth with the greateſt avidity: while the haughty dogmatiſt, perſuaded that he can erect a complete ſyſtem of Theology by the mere help of philoſophy, diſdains any farther aid, and rejects this adventitious inſtructor. To be a philoſophical Sceptic, is, in a man of letters, the firſt and moſt eſſential ſtep towards being a ſound, believing Chriſtian; a propoſition which I would willingly recommend to the attention of Pamphilus: And I hope Cleanthes will forgive me for interpoſing ſo far in the education and inſtruction of his pupil.

Cleanthes and Philo purſued not this converſation much farther: and as nothing ever made greater impreſſion on me than all the reaſoning of that day; ſo, I confeſs, that upon a ſerious review of the whole, I cannot but think, that Philo's principles are more probable than Demea's; but that thoſe of Cleanthes approach ſtill nearer to the truth.

NOTES

TO THE

FOURTH VOLUME.

NOTE [A], p. 10.

" FRAGILIS & laborioſa mortalitas in partes iſta digeſſit, " infirmitatis ſuæ memor, ut portionibus quiſquis coleret " quo maxime indigeret. " Plin. lib. ii. cap. 7. So early as Heſiod's time there were 30,000 deities. *Oper. & Dier.* lib. i. ver. 250. But the taſk to be performed by theſe ſeems ſtill too great for their number. The provinces of the deities were ſo ſubdivided, that there was even a God of *Sneezing*. See Ariſt. *Probl.* ſect. 33. cap. 7. The province of copulation, ſuitably to the importance and dignity of it, was divided among ſeveral deities.

NOTE [B], p. 23.

IT will be eaſy to give a reaſon, why Thales, Anaximander, and thoſe early philoſophers, who really were atheiſts, might be very orthodox in the Pagan creed; and why Anaxagoras and Socrates, though real atheiſts, muſt

naturally, in ancient times, be eſteemed impious. The blind, unguided powers of nature, if they could produce men, might alſo produce ſuch beings as Jupiter and Neptune; who being the moſt powerful, intelligent exiſtences in the world, would be proper objects of worſhip. But where a Supreme Intelligence, the firſt cauſe of all, is admitted, theſe capricious beings, if they exiſt at all, muſt appear very ſubordinate and dependent, and conſequently be excluded from the rank of deities. Plato (de leg. lib. x.) aſſigns this reaſon for the imputation thrown on Anaxagoras, namely, his denying the divinity of the ſtars, planets, and other created objects.

NOTE [C], p. 42.

VERRIUS Flaccus, cited by Pliny, lib. xxviii. cap. 2. affirmed, that it was uſual for the Romans, before they laid ſiege to any town, to invocate the tutelar deity of the place; and by promiſing him greater honors than thoſe he at preſent enjoyed, bribe him to betray his old friends and votaries. The name of the tutelar deity of Rome was for this reaſon kept a moſt religious myſtery; leſt the enemies of the republic ſhould be able, in the ſame manner, to draw him over to their ſervice. For without the name, they thought nothing of that kind could be practiſed. Pliny ſays, that the common form of invocation was preſerved to his time in the ritual of the pontiffs. And Macrobius has tranſmitted a copy of it from the ſecret things of Sammonicus Serenus.

NOTE [D], p. 44.

MOST nations have fallen into this guilt of human ſacrifices; though, perhaps, that impious ſuperſtition has never prevailed very much in any civilized nation, unleſs we except the Carthaginians; for the Tyrians ſoon aboliſhed it. A ſacrifice is conceived as a preſent; and any preſent is delivered to their deity by deſtroying it, and rendering it uſeleſs to men; by burning what is ſolid, pouring out the liquid, and killing the animate. For want of a better way of doing him ſervice, we do ourſelves an injury; and fancy that we thereby expreſs, at leaſt, the heartineſs of our good-will and adoration. Thus our mercenary devotion deceives ourſelves, and imagines it deceives the deity.

NOTE [E], p. 54.

IT is ſtrange that the Egyptian religion, though ſo abſurd, ſhould yet have borne ſo great a reſemblance to the Jewiſh, that ancient writers even of the greateſt genius were not able to obſerve any difference between them. For it is remarkable that both Tacitus and Suetonius, when they mention that decree of the ſenate, under Tiberius, by which the Egyptian and Jewiſh proſelytes were baniſhed from Rome, expreſsly treat theſe religions as the ſame; and it appears, that even the decree itſelf was founded on that ſuppoſition. "Actum & de ſacris Ægyptiis "Judaicisque pellendis; factumque patrum conſultum, ut "quatuor millia libertini generis, *ea ſuperſtitioni* infecta, "quis idonea ætas, in inſulam Sardiniam veherentur, "coercendis illic latrociniis, &, ſi ob gravitatem cœli in- "teriſſent, *vile damnum*: Ceteri cederent Italia, niſi

" certam ante diem profanos ritus exuiſſent. " Tacit. ann. lib. ii. c. 85. " Externas cæremonias, Ægyptios Judaicos- " que ritus compeſcuit; coactis, qui *ſuperſtitione ea* tene- " bantur, religioſas veſtes cum inſtrumento omni combu- " rere, &c. " Sueton. Tiber. c. 36. Theſe wiſe heathens, obſerving ſomething in the general air, and genius and ſpirit of the two religions to be the ſame, eſteemed the differences of their dogmas too frivolous to deſerve any attention.

NOTE [F], p. 64.

XENOPHON's conduct, as related by himſelf, is, at once, an inconteſtible proof of the general credulity of mankind in thoſe ages, and the incoherencies, in all ages, of men's opinions in religious matters. That great captain and philoſopher, the diſciple of Socrates, and one who has delivered ſome of the moſt refined ſentiments with regard to a deity, gave all the following marks of vulgar, pagan ſuperſtition. By Socrates's advice, he conſulted the oracle of Delphi, before he would engage in the expedition of Cyrus. De exped. lib. iii. p. 294. ex edit. Leuncl. Sees a dream the night after the generals were ſeized; which he pays great regard to, but thinks ambiguous. Id. p. 295. He and the whole army regard ſneezing as a very lucky omen. Id. p. 300. Has another dream when he comes to the river Centrites, which his fellow-general, Chiroſophus, alſo pays great regard to. Id. lib. iv. p. 323. The Greeks, ſuffering from a cold north-wind, ſacrifice to it; and the hiſtorian obſerves, that it immediately abated. Id. p. 329. Xenophon conſults the ſacrifices in ecret, before he would form any reſolution with himſelf

about ſettling a colony. Lib. v. p. 359. He was himſelf a very ſkilful augur. Id. p. 361. Is determined by the victims to refuſe the ſole command of the army which was offered to him. Lib. vi. p. 273. Cleander, the Spartan, though very deſirous of it, refuſes it for the ſame reaſon. Id. p. 392. Xenophon mentions an old dream, with the interpretation given him, when he firſt joined Cyrus, p. 373. Mentions alſo the place of Hercules's deſcent into hell as believing it, and ſays the marks of it are ſtill remaining. Id. p. 375. Had almoſt ſtarved the army, rather than lead them to the field againſt the auſpices. Id. p. 382, 383. His friend, Euclides, the augur, would not believe that he had brought no money from the expedition, till he (Euclides) ſacrificed, and then he ſaw the matter clearly in the Exta. Lib. vii. p. 425. The ſame philoſopher, propoſing a project of mines for the increaſe of the Athenian revenues, adviſes them firſt to conſult the oracle. De rat. red. p. 392. That all this devotion was not a farce, in order to ſerve a political purpoſe, appears both from the facts themſelves, and from the genius of that age, when little or nothing could be gained by hypocriſy. Beſides, Xenophon, as appears from his Memorabilia, was a kind of heretic in thoſe times, which no political devotee ever is. It is for the ſame reaſon I maintain, that Newton, Locke, Clarke, &c. being *Arians* or *Socinians*, were very ſincere in the creed they profeſſed: And I always oppoſe this argument to ſome libertines, who will needs have it, that it was impoſſible but that theſe philoſophers muſt have been hypocrites.

NOTE

NOTE [G], p. 70.

BACCHUS, a divine being, is repreſented by the heathen mythology as the inventor of dancing and the theatre. Plays were anciently even a part of public worſhip on the moſt ſolemn occaſions, and often employed in times of peſtilence, to appeaſe the offended deities. But they have been zealouſly proſcribed by the godly in later ages; and the playhouſe, according to a learned divine, is the porch of hell.

But in order to ſhow more evidently, that it is poſſible for a religion to repreſent the divinity in ſtill a more immoral and unamiable light than he was pictured by the ancients, we ſhall cite a long paſſage from an author of taſte and imagination, who was ſurely no enemy to Chriſtianity. It is the Chevalier Ramſay, a writer, who had ſo laudable an inclination to be orthodox, that his reaſon never found any difficulty, even in the doctrines which freethinkers ſcruple the moſt, the trinity, incarnation, and ſatisfaction: His humanity alone, of which he ſeems to have had a great ſtock, rebelled againſt the doctrines of eternal reprobation and predeſtination. He expreſſes himſelf thus: 'What ſtrange ideas,' ſays he, 'would an Indian or a 'Chineſe philoſopher have of our holy religion, if they 'judged by the ſchemes given of it by our modern 'freethinkers, and phariſaical doctors of all ſects? Ac-'cording to the odious and too *vulgar* ſyſtem of theſe 'incredulous ſcoffers and credulous ſcribblers,' "The "God of the Jews is a moſt cruel, unjuſt, partial, and "fantaſtical being. He created, about 6000 years ago, "a man and a woman, and placed them in a fine garden "of Aſia, of which there are no remains. This garden

" was furniſhed with all ſorts of trees, fountains, and
" flowers. He allowed them the uſe of all the fruits of
" this beautiful garden, except one, that was planted in
" the midſt thereof, and that had in it a ſecret virtue of
" preſerving them in continual health and vigor of body
" and mind, of exalting their natural powers, and making
" them wiſe. The devil entered into the body of a ſerpent,
" and ſolicited the firſt woman to eat of this forbidden
" fruit; ſhe engaged her husband to do the ſame. To
" puniſh this ſlight curioſity and natural deſire of life and
" knowledge, God not only threw our firſt parents out of
" paradiſe, but he condemned all their poſterity to tem-
" poral miſery, and the greateſt part of them to eternal
" pains, though the ſouls of theſe innocent children have
" no more relation to that of Adam than to thoſe of
" Nero and Mahomet; ſince, according to the ſcholaſtic
" drivellers, fabuliſts, and mythologiſts, all ſouls are
" created pure, and infuſed immediately into mortal bodies,
" ſo ſoon as the fœtus is formed. To accompliſh the bar-
" barous, partial decree of predeſtination and reprobation,
" God abandoned all nations to darkneſs, idolatry, and
" ſuperſtition, without any ſaving knowledge or ſalutary
" graces; unleſs it was one particular nation, whom he
" choſe as his peculiar people. This choſen nation was,
" however, the moſt ſtupid, ungrateful, rebellious and
" perfidious of all nations. After God had thus kept the
" far greater part of all the human ſpecies, during near
" 4000 years, in a reprobate ſtate, he changed all of a
" ſudden, and took a fancy for other nations beſide the
" Jews. Then he ſent his only begotten Son to the world,
" under a human form, to appeaſe his wrath, ſatisfy his
" vindictive juſtice, and die for the pardon of ſin. Very

" few nations, however, have heard of this goſpel; and " all the reſt, though left in invincible ignorance, are " damned without exception, or any poſſibility of remiſſion. " The greateſt part of thoſe who have heard of it, have " changed only ſome ſpeculative notions about God, and " ſome external forms in worſhip: For, in other reſpects, " the bulk of Chriſtians have continued as corrupt as the " reſt of mankind in their morals; yea, ſo much the " more perverſe and criminal, that their lights were greater. " Unleſs it be a very ſmall ſelect number, all other " Chriſtians, like the pagans, will be for ever damned; " the great ſacrifice offered up for them will become void " and of no effect; God will take delight for ever in their " torments and blaſphemies; and though he can, by one " *fiat*, change their hearts, yet they will remain for ever " unconverted and unconvertible, becauſe he will be for " ever unappeaſable and irreconcileable. It is true, that " all this makes God odious, a hater of ſouls, rather " than a lover of them; a cruel, vindictive tyrant, an " impotent or a wrathful demon, rather than an all-powerful, " beneficent Father of ſpirits: Yet all this is a myſtery. " He has ſecret reaſons for his conduct, that are impe- " netrable; and though he appears unjuſt and barbarous, " yet we muſt believe the contrary, becauſe what is in- " juſtice, crime, cruelty, and the blackeſt malice in us, " is in him juſtice, mercy, and ſovereign goodneſs. "

' Thus the incredulous freethinkers, the Judaizing Chriſtians,
' and the fataliſtic doctors, have disfigured and diſhonored
' the ſublime myſteries of our holy faith; thus they have
' confounded the nature of good and evil; transformed
' the moſt monſtrous paſſions into divine attributes, and
' ſurpaſſed the pagans in blaſphemy, by aſcribing to the

'eternal nature, as perfections, what makes the moſt 'horrid crimes amongſt men. The groſſer pagans con- 'tented themſelves with divinizing luſt, inceſt, and 'adultery; but the predeſtinarian doctors have divinized 'cruelty, wrath, fury, vengeance, and all the blackeſt 'vices.' See the Chevalier Ramſay's philoſophical prin- ciples of natural and revealed religion, Part. II. p. 401.

The ſame author aſſerts, in other places, that the *Arminian* and *Moliniſt* ſchemes ſerve very little to mend the matter: And having thus thrown himſelf out of all received ſects of Chriſtianity, he is obliged to advance a ſyſtem of his own, which is a kind of *Origeniſm*, and ſuppoſes the pre-exiſtence of the ſouls both of men and beaſts, and the eternal ſaivation and converſion of all men, beaſts, and devils. But this notion, being quite peculiar to himſelf, we need not treat of. I thought the opinions of this ingenious author very curious, but I pretend not to warrant the juſtneſs of them.

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